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DEATH-BED SCENES,

AND

PASTORAL CONVERSATIONS.

BY THE LATE

JOHN WARTON, D. D.

friend of William Wood

EDITED BY HIS SONS.

Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.—MATTHEW xiii. 52.

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.—2 TIMOTHY iii. 17.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE BY THE EDITOR



SECOND EDITION OF THE FIRST VOLUME

Two months ago when we returned to the
Volume of this work we were struck by the
changes bestowed upon the first edition of the
various chapters, but the whole edition of the volume
being now exhausted and another edition required, an
extensive revision of the text was deemed to be
desirable. The second edition is a complete
revision of the first, and is in many respects
entirely new. It contains many new facts and
figures, and is written in a more concise and
clear manner than the first. The illustrations
have been revised and many new ones added.
The text has been carefully revised and
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PREFACE BY THE EDITORS

TO THE

SECOND EDITION OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Two months ago, when we ventured to publish a second Volume of this work, we were induced to do it by the praise bestowed upon the first, which reached us through various channels; but the whole edition of that volume being now exhausted, and another edition required, so extensive a demand is a more decisive and substantial proof of the esteem and popularity which it enjoys.

That it should be the lot of a book to be popular, with a title so unattractive, or rather forbidding, and with so awful a matter as death for its main subject, speaks strongly for the serious turn of the age, whatever it may do for the talent of the Author. He himself, we are sure, would have claimed no other merit from the success of his labours, had he lived to see it, than that of having faithfully described what he saw and heard in the course of his own experience. The truth is, we believe, that, whilst all men know that they have this last scene to act, very many are desirous of knowing also how they may act it well; and they hope to acquire that momentous information from the study of this book. It is our hearty wish that such a hope may not be in vain.

This second Edition will differ from the first in no other respect than in superior correctness. Having been very

carefully collated with the manuscript, it will be disfigured with fewer errors.

We are happy to announce that the story of "PENITENCE" will soon be published by itself in a cheaper form, so as to enable the rich to circulate it widely in the humbler ranks of life, where it is chiefly calculated to do good.

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR.

IT has often occurred to me as something wonderful, that, amongst the vast variety of books, which are to be met with, on the important subject of Religion, there should still be wanted a manual for the information and direction of the Minister in his daily intercourse with sick persons and other members of his flock. There are indeed plenty of excellent theoretical treatises upon this branch of the Minister's duty; and much also might be learnt from the biography of Clergymen, who have been eminently active in their parochial labours. But all this is too general; and consequently it is too often not sufficiently obvious, how to apply such knowledge in our own particular practice. What I lament, therefore, and am surprised at, is, that, with the exception of some small pieces of Mr. Mayow's, and two or three accounts of the conversions of profligate men, there should be no book (at least I am not acquainted with any such book) containing the detail of actual conversations, which have passed between the Minister and his Parishioners, under striking circumstances. No Clergyman, having had the care of a Parish for a considerable period, can possibly have failed of falling into such circumstances; and I, for one, in my earlier days, would have thanked any body, who should have been kind enough to furnish me with the results of his experience. I am confident, from what has happened to myself, that a young Clergyman must be very much at a loss, how to conduct himself on trying occasions, and how to take advantage daily of the openings, which may be afforded him, for promoting Religion and right feeling in his Parish; so that he will either do mischief by attempting *that* to which he is not competent; or

being aware of his own incompetency, he will sit down inactive and idle.

Having been in the habit then, for several years, of remarking this defect of instruction with regard to practical divinity, and the whole business of a Parish-priest; and having myself, meanwhile, been thrown perpetually into the most interesting and awful scenes with my own Parishioners; I determined at length to take up my pen, and to commit to paper, whatever having passed under my personal observation might be most likely to be useful to others of the same profession. I have now for some time been thus engaged; and it is my intention to proceed so long as I am able, or until I have exhausted the subject. Of this, however, there is very little probability; the subject itself being so comprehensive and copious. My children, therefore, will find amongst my papers, when I am taken from them, some voluminous manuscripts headed with this Preface; and they are at liberty to send them to the press, if the opinion of any judicious friend should concur with their own, that the work deserves publicity. During my life it cannot be permitted to see the light. There is too much in it of my own feelings, and of indirect praise of myself; and also characters and actions are described, and will continue to be so, which would at once be applied to their prototypes, and thus might stir up a flame of animosity amongst us. But, when we are mingled together in the grave, all these things will be forgotten, and the use only will remain to our posterity.

I had no thought, originally, of doing more than assist my younger brethren of the clerical order, who might be appointed to the management of large Parishes, without time or opportunities to prepare themselves in an adequate manner for so difficult and momentous an undertaking. But, in proceeding with my work, I begin to flatter myself with the notion, that it may possibly both amuse and instruct every description of readers. The scenery must be allowed sometimes to partake of the air of romance, although strictly conformable to truth and nature: and the way in which the great doctrines and duties

as well as evidences of the Christian religion are set forth and explained, being somewhat novel; at the same time that it is also, I hope, much plainer and less tedious than is too often the case in more regular treatises; many persons may be tempted, upon the recommendation of the Clergy, to peruse the book; and may find, unexpectedly, their fancy pleased, their knowledge increased, and their hearts touched and improved. In fact, the little histories and dialogues herein contained will necessarily embrace all ranks of men, from the highest to the lowest. A populous Parish, like mine, in the neighbourhood of a still more populous town, has a race of inhabitants, fluctuating every day; of almost every possible class; and professing almost every possible sentiment in politics, as well as in religion. My constant residence upon the spot, and the daily habits of my life, have brought, and will still bring me into immediate contact with all; and the whole work, when finished voluntarily, or stopped by the hand of Death, will be the fruit of my whole experience. Upon these grounds, therefore, I may perhaps look forward to more numerous readers, and more extensive utility, than I at first contemplated.

It may be proper to say a word or two upon the style; not to disarm criticism; for the severest criticism will fly harmless over my head, when I am mouldering in the dust; but to inform the reader, that, the matter being the only thing of any essential consequence in such a work as this, the style will be neglected altogether, except so far as relates to perspicuity, which, I hope, will be found throughout. Fine writing is not to be expected at all; and sometimes even the rules of grammar may not be carefully observed. For this work must be written, at all events, in considerable haste, on account of my other numerous employments; and I am morally certain beforehand, that I shall never revise it with any view to the correction or polishing of the style. The first rude sketch will be all that the reader will ever have. However, there is no doubt but that I shall talk as well upon paper, as either I myself, or the persons conversing with me, do in the real transaction; and every thing beyond this would be an out-

rage upon nature, and create a reasonable suspicion, that the whole recorded transaction is illusory. Indeed this suspicion will at any rate sometimes arise; because the tone will be now and then above the tone of usual conversation; and because ideas and expressions will be ascribed to particular persons, of which those persons may be thought incapable. In point of fact, I am often in situations in which I am led to preach, rather than to speak; I am compelled, that is, to speak, continuously; and then the magnitude of the subject would naturally raise any man's language, under the same circumstances, to a loftier standard. With respect to others, I shall always preserve their ideas, and sometimes their very words, when there is any thing remarkable in them. But I have not hitherto been studious about it; and especially in the conversations related to happen between myself and people of low rank, I have discarded almost all their vulgarisms; and also I have put their ideas into better shape and form than they would have done for themselves. For I did not consider this to be a matter of any essential concern. Their meaning, and not their actual expressions, is all that is absolutely necessary to be known. In general, however, I trust, there will be enough of nature remaining to keep up the interest of a real conversation.

One thing more, and I have done. This work being designed, if God spare my life long enough, to embrace every topic of importance to a Parish-priest, whether spiritual or temporal; for the sake of greater conciseness and unity of subject, I have brought together, and shall continue do so, into a single conversation with a single person, what may have actually occurred in more conversations and with more persons than one. This information will perhaps destroy a part of the interest that might be taken in some particular characters; because it will be always a matter of doubt how much of what is recorded may really belong to them; but the truth, nevertheless, should be told.

And now, reader, farewell! When this comes into thy hands, I shall be beyond thy censures, or thy praise.

PREFACE BY THE EDITORS.

The reader will have seen already, in the Author's own Preface, what were his views and intentions in the composition of the following work. He has now paid the last debt to Nature, and the task of ushering these Dialogues into the world has devolved upon his children. They were not new to us. We remember well with what delight we used to hear him read them in our earliest years. Every book was instantly put aside, and every amusement relinquished, and every ear opened to listen to him, when he announced the joyful news that he had a fresh history prepared for us; and, as we grew older, he permitted us to read over by ourselves some of the more difficult Dialogues, which at first were above our comprehension and strength. We trust that we shall not be deceived, by our partiality towards a beloved Father, in thinking that they may prove to others, what they did to us, a store-house of the knowledge and practice of divine things.

His injunction to consult a judicious friend, as to the propriety of publishing these pieces, we have not obeyed; because we were aware, that he himself, long before his decease, had shown several of them to many judicious persons, who were unanimous in their approbation of what they saw, and lamented his resolution of withholding them during his life-time from the public eye. Of such alone does the present Volume consist. Another will soon follow, if the wise and the good are pleased with this.

What he says in his Preface, with respect to the nature of the composition itself, has been verified. It never re-

ceived his finishing hand. There are no interlineations even, or alterations of single words, which we do not remember from the beginning; and we ourselves have not altered a syllable. Usefulness, not literary fame, was his sole object.

The names of his Parish, and of the adjoining Town, it is proper, at present, for obvious reasons, to conceal. His own name we have not concealed, because it is so common.

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DEATH-BED SCENES.

CHAPTER I.

MR. WARING—INFIDELITY.

As I was presiding one night in the select Vestry, I observed Mrs. Waring, amongst many others, applying for Parochial relief. Her husband's sickness was the plea; and as we all knew that he was now grown old, and had seen better days, her request was granted without any opposition or difficulty whatever; and without putting any questions to her, which might have wounded her feelings under the circumstances of her distress. Five shillings however were all that were given at that time out of the rate for the poor; and I therefore determined to visit the sick man the following morning: to ascertain by inquiry upon the spot what was his real condition; to assist him, if necessary, out of my private charity funds; and more especially to discharge my spiritual functions for the good of his soul.

Indeed I had no doubt, that this was the help, of which he stood most in need. At Church I had never seen him during the whole course of my incumbency. Common fame reported him to be an Infidel, or even an Atheist. His habits had been to live in the Alehouse amongst the lowest company, whom he harangued against the Government and against Christianity; and being much superior to those with whom he associated, and having also no small fluency of talking, he convinced and corrupted many of his hearers. In the mean time, having a little smattering of law, he pretended to give advice upon legal matters, and earned a penny now and then by setting his neighbours together by the ears. If letters or petitions were wanted, he was the man to write them for what he could get. He measured land also; and thus by these various methods, picking up a scanty subsistence, and enjoying continued health, without the burden of a family, he dragged on to the age of threescore years and ten; and, as far as appeared, never once troubled himself with the thoughts of another world which was to come hereafter and to last for ever.

To myself, without knowing me personally, he was decidedly hostile; not only because I was of the species of those who wore black coats, and devoured the substance of the people in the shape of fees, and tithes, and Easter-offerings; but also because he thought me too much disposed to meddle in the secular affairs of the Parish; to stop the current of his business; and to cut off the sources of his gain. In his cups therefore, as I was informed, he never ceased to abuse the Parson; and sometimes I was assailed by anonymous letters, which were suspected to come from his malicious pen.

Such was the person, whom I proposed to visit, under the favourable circumstances of poverty and sickness, in the hope that I might take advantage of them, and catch him with guile for his everlasting benefit. His house was at the distance of one mile and a half from mine; but upon inquiry I found that he had been compelled to quit it; that all his best furniture had been seized and sold to satisfy the demands of the Landlord; and that he himself, unable to walk on account of his infirmities, had been carried out in a great chair to an obscure lodging in the neighbourhood. All this betokened considerable distress, which was ordained, no doubt, by the good providence of God, to create serious reflection upon the past, and to awaken salutary ideas of futurity. Having received this information, my hopes were increased, that I might be a successful, although an humble instrument in God's hands, for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes of love and mercy.

In the cottage, where he had taken up his abode, there was a poor family living on the ground-floor; he himself and his wife occupying a single chamber above. Mrs. Waring, having been called down to me below, immediately conducted me up to her husband. He was sitting in the great chair by the side of a small fire. His face, which I saw first, was red and bloated, and his eyes inflamed. His feet, legs, and thighs, were so much swelled, that the heels of his shoes were down, and the knees of his breeches unbuttoned. His body too was of an enormous size, both because he was of a corpulent habit, and in consequence of the dropsy, under which he now manifestly laboured. His waistcoat was open to avoid pressure. On his head he wore a red night-cap. Close by him was a table covered with the various drugs and fomentations which his disease required. The chamber was crowded with the wreck of his property; an old bed without curtains; some broken chairs; pots, kettles, jugs, and sundry other wares; all the worse for use.

The best chair that could be found was appropriated to me; which Mrs. Waring first carefully dusted, and then placed in the most vacant spot. In the mean time she had already introduced me by name, but he did not seem to comprehend who I was; so I said, "I have been told, Sir, that you are not very fond of Parsons; and I presume therefore you did not expect that a Parson would come to

see you; no, not even the Parson of the Parish. But here I am; not deterred by general report; and my intention and desire is to do you all the good that may lie in my power."

"Oh!" he replied, "it is Dr. Warton, is it? I beg your pardon, Sir; I did not know you. Pray, sit down, Sir. I fear, Sir, you have got a wrong opinion of my character, for want of being better acquainted with me. I have a great many enemies in the Parish, and they have not scrupled to slander me to you."

"Well, well," I said, "let us talk and think no more of *that*; at all events we will be friends now, if you will. And you may be perfectly sure, that, in thus visiting you, I can have no private interest of my own in view. Your welfare is my sole object."

To this he assented, and thanked me for my kindness towards him.

Having thus begun with tolerably good omens, I proceeded to inquire about his sickness, expressing my fears that it was both painful and dangerous. In answer he was very communicative; and it appeared that his disorder was distressing in the extreme; a vast mass of water collecting perpetually, and discharging itself through every pore of his body; and his respiration being at times so much impeded, that he had scarcely breath enough to tell me his own story. He had been at the nearest hospital, in an early stage of his complaint, when it seemed to be within the reach of art; but had unwisely returned home, before the proper system was tried, because he was deprived of many little things which he considered essential to his comfort. Since this the disorder had increased rapidly; yet he would not admit any idea of danger. In fact, he was manifestly afraid to die. I put him in mind of his advanced age, and of the usually terrible effects of dropsy, which in his case were too evident even to myself. Still he was most reluctant to entertain a thought of death; and he proposed to me to obtain admission for him into another hospital at a greater distance, but where the medical attendants, as he flattered himself, were men of greater skill. I promised to do this, and named the day in the following week for his departure.

This being settled, I next asked him, as delicately as I could, what was the state of his pecuniary matters; insinuating gently, that I thought it possible, from what I had heard, and from what I now saw, he might want a little assistance, which I should be able and happy to give. On this point he was very reserved, and would not at all acknowledge his difficulties. Of course he was ignorant that I knew of his application to the parish; and I thought it might be very detrimental to the success of my other objects, if I then mentioned it to him; so I turned it off, by saying that I would talk that matter over with his wife, when I went away. I did so at the door, stating my surprise also that he should endeavour to conceal

his circumstances from me. "Ah! Sir," she said, "pride, pride, is the cause. He has too high a stomach to confess his poverty; and yet, without the relief which I had last night from the officers, we should have been in some danger of starving." I gave her what was necessary for the present, promising to add to it hereafter; and I thought with myself, that, possibly, his prejudices against me, not yet sufficiently softened down, having led him to consider me his enemy, he was unwilling to furnish me with that sort of triumph, which an enemy might have enjoyed in witnessing his destitute condition. Afterwards, when he knew me better, he had no false shame, or other difficulty about it; but received my offers readily and gratefully.

However, I was now to come to the most important subject, without being in possession of this great advantage; and I said, "Your worldly affairs, I fear, Sir, are in a very unprosperous state; and your body is certainly afflicted with a dreadful disease. What is there in your case to bear up your spirits under such an accumulation of calamity? Your mind, I hope, is not diseased, as well as your body."—"My mind," he replied, rather sternly, as disliking to be questioned, and yet by no means with the tone of a man really tranquil at heart, "my mind is quite at ease, Sir;" and immediately his whole countenance and restless air belied him.

I saw it; but I said, "I wish indeed it were so; provided your tranquillity were founded on solid grounds. To be called out of this world into eternity with an uneasy conscience is most terrible; but it is equally unsafe to depart with false, delusive hopes. May I be permitted therefore to ask you, (as I am sure I ask only for your own good, and not out of an idle curiosity, or with any foolish desire of disputation, under such awful circumstances,) what those grounds are on which you rely?"—"I will tell you plainly," he answered; "if I die, of which, however, I do not see any present danger, I shall either be nothing at all, or I shall not be miserable. My conscience does not accuse me of any crime."

"It seems, then," I said, "that you think it possible that death may be followed by an entire annihilation; but also on the other hand, thinking it possible likewise that there may be a future state, which will be a state of retribution, you have made due preparation for this latter alternative." To this he answered, without hesitation, "I do not pretend to have made any other preparation, than by doing justice always to my neighbours."

"Alas! alas! Sir," I replied, "does not the experience of us all agree in this with Scripture, 'that there is not one just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not?'" He took up the word Scripture hastily, and said, "I have no objection, Sir, to talk with you; but with what you call Scripture I have nothing to do. I put no faith in it. We do not want it. Let a man do his duty, and

he has nothing to fear." This he spoke with a most decided air, and collecting all his breath to utter the sentiment. His vehemence indeed exhausted him; and he was compelled to pause before he could finish his sentence. It was too evident that he wished Christianity to be false.

I interposed with coolness; "but you will admit, I suppose, Sir, the morality of the Gospel at least; and therefore must consent to be tried by it, as the rule of your actions."—"I allow," he said, "the morality of the Gospel to be excellent. But what is that to me?"

"It concerns you in this manner," I replied: "Every man must be tried according to the best rule with which he is acquainted. If the morals of the Gospel be the best that we know, which you seem to grant, we must be tried by those morals. You would not have a man, I presume, who knows a superior law, to be tried afterwards by an inferior one? Put the divine origin of the law for the present quite out of the question; and yet you see that if your conscience tells you that one law exceeds another in perfection, it tells you at the same time that you must obey the better law, and that you will be judged by it."

He was staggered and alarmed, lest he should have been surprised at once into some conclusion which he might abhor; but I did not wish to profit by his temporary confusion, and so endeavour to push the argument further than it would reasonably go. I continued therefore in this manner:—"You tell me that your conscience accuses you of no crime; and that you have always done justice to your neighbour. But how has your conscience been enlightened? What notions have you formed of crimes, of justice, of your neighbour? He who would be most enlightened on these subjects must study the Gospel; and he who would discharge all his duties with propriety to God and man, must make the Gospel his model. This cannot be well denied. Have you therefore done this, which you are bound to do by natural reason? And if you have tried to do it, do you not perceive instantly your own deficiencies? When you compare your life with the perfect, holy, sublime law of the Gospel, do you not see and acknowledge immediately, how far, how astonishingly far, you have come short of the glory of God? If I were to scrutinize your actions from your youth upwards, could you lay your hand upon your heart and say, all these I have faithfully performed? Has the fear of God been constantly before your eyes? Have you loved him with all the faculties of your heart and mind; and prayed to him for his blessings; and thanked him for every mercy, even when he afflicted you? What has been your conduct to your parents? Did you never wilfully disobey them, or create them any pain? How have you served your king and country? Have you never misrepresented his government and actions, so as

to render others dissatisfied with them, and thus to become discontented subjects? Have you never spoken evil of dignities; which the Gospel, consulting the peace and happiness of mankind, strictly forbids? Have you extended your ideas of neighbourhood as the Gospel directs you, so as to embrace within the compass of it countryman and stranger, friend and enemy? and especially every child of sorrow? And then, have you been active in performing all the duties that spring from these wide relations? Have you loved your very enemies? Or have you indulged the sinful passions of hatred, envy, malice, towards them? Have you ever taken vengeance into your own hands, and not left it to God? Lastly, have you never violated any of the pure laws of temperance, sobriety, and chastity; neither polluting yourself by sensual vices, nor ruining others by the act or by the example, from your youth up until now?"

Thus I ran through, as rapidly as possible, the whole summary of the moral duties; not suffering him to interrupt me, which he attempted again and again where he felt his conscience clear as to any particular charge; but intending to overwhelm his arrogant assumption of self-sufficiency, by the very multiplicity and variety of the subjects for self-examination which I poured out upon him all together in a mass. And then I summed up the matter in a few words, saying, "Is there now a single man in the world so little acquainted with himself, as to think, that when he stands face to face before the great Judge, he might venture to plead, that he is guiltless in all these respects; that he has perfectly corresponded to the design of Providence in making him; and that he is entitled to the infinite rewards of a future state? On the contrary, would not the very best of men, who are always the most humble, cry out 'we are but dust and ashes; we will shut our mouths before God, or only ask for pardon?'"

I was myself visibly affected by my own arguments, and by the earnestness with which I had spoken; but the sick man was little moved, outwardly at least; and at all events he showed no disposition to concede any thing, but a determination to resist to the last extremity. For he said, "if I am deficient in any thing, I owe it to my nature. God is the author of every man's nature—God implanted in us all our appetites and passions; and, therefore, if we follow the bent of them, he has no reason to be angry, and consequently will not punish us."

"You put yourself then," I replied, "upon the same level with the brute beast, and forget that you have a rational part of your nature, which the brute beast has not, and which raises you above him. And reason is so manifestly superior to every other part of your nature, that you must see at once, that it is not only fit, but intended by Providence, to govern the rest; that no injury may arise

to the man himself, or to the community; and that the Creator may be glorified by the proper use of that pre-eminence which he has bestowed. If, therefore, we follow the bent of our appetites and passions, and suffer them to domineer over our reason instead of being regulated by it, we have not done our duty: we have not acted correspondently to the capacities of our whole nature; we have dishonoured our Maker; we deserve his wrath, and must expect to be punished—Is not this so?"

"Suppose it were," he answered; "may we not be sorry for what has been done amiss; and correct our errors, if there be any; and amend our lives, if they require amendment; and will not this satisfy God, and avert his anger? Your own Gospel allows the efficacy of repentance, and recommends it."

"It does indeed," I said; "but only upon one condition; which condition implies that you embrace the Gospel as true, and believe and trust in it. Do this, and then repentance will be acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

"I cannot do it," was his answer—"Nature teaches repentance; and that is sufficient. I hold by nature."

"A bad support, it is to be feared," I said "for any of us in our present circumstances. For what is to become of all the past? Will sorrow for it undo it? Will even the most complete change and reformation of life for the future undo the past? And if you are in the right way now, it is no more than what you ought to have been always; and cannot therefore excuse you for the time in which you went wrong. The God of nature requires a perfect obedience to his laws in every period of your existence. You cannot make a bargain with him to be vicious in one period and virtuous in another. It is plain, therefore, that even a sincere repentance can supply no solid ground of peace and security, without God's authority to that effect; and such an authority cannot be had without a revelation from heaven. And whose repentance was ever so sincere and complete as not to need a second repentance? In fact, is not the whole life of the generality of mankind an alternation of sin and repentance, repentance and sin; until death overtakes them at last?"

He could not deny it; but still he persisted in saying, that there were so many objections against Christianity, that he could not admit it, even with any advantage which it might offer to him. Upon this I rose up, and took my departure; not being able to spare more time for conversation at present; but I besought him, as he valued eternity, to examine himself well, and to prepare all his objections against my next call, which should be in a few days. He promised that he would do so, but with a very ill grace; and it was clear, that, whilst he could not pretend but that his opinions were shaken, and that he was absolutely beaten out of some of the common holds of infidelity, it had wrought no joy, but sorrow in his heart.

At my next visit I found him sitting on the bed-side. He was alarmingly worse; the other parts of his dress were the same as before; but he was without a coat; the water had made such inroads upon every part of his body, that it did not seem possible for him to bear up against it much longer. His eyes were still more inflamed, yet glassy and dim. To my first questions about his present state of disease, he gave in answer a most piteous account of himself; no appetite, no rest, no power of breathing. All idea of the more distant hospital was quite abandoned. To convey him there alive appeared to be absolutely impossible; yet he flattered himself, that he might rally sufficiently to go to the nearer hospital where he had been before. He was evidently more than ever afraid to die, whilst the last thread was about to snap asunder, and to plunge him into eternity.

Anxious for his eternal welfare, I now said, "It is my painful duty to tell you, Sir, that your life is in imminent danger—God only knows how short the remnant of it may be! The most ignorant person must see that your disorder is advancing with rapid strides, and your doctors declare that nothing can be done for your relief by the power of medicine. In some cases it would not be so painful to me to behold the approach of death; but in your case it is beyond measure painful, because I perceive that you have cast away the only staff upon which you might have supported yourself with firmness against all its terrors. But is it indeed true, Sir, that you have cast away this staff? Was not our last conversation sufficient, imperfect as it was, to show you that there was nothing secure but in Revelation? To take up the matter as we began; is it not undeniable, that we are all so defective, as to stand in need of a Saviour? And if we are humble enough to feel this, can any doctrine be so worthy of acceptance, so consolatory, so cheering, as that which teaches us that there is such a Saviour, and that he is the Son of God himself? What are your objections, Sir, to this doctrine? You engaged to put them together, and to bring them forward for my consideration on the present occasion."

It chilled me with horror to behold the sick man preparing himself to utter his cavils against the glad tidings of mercy; for his countenance betrayed the intentions of his heart. His head gray with age; his body sinking under the force of a deadly disease: his feet on the very verge of the grave; he commended not his spirit into the hands of that mighty Being who gave it; he prayed not that it might be presented to Him cleansed and purified by the blood of the immaculate Lamb; he paused only to rally his failing breath, that he might expend even the last particle of it, as it should seem, in depreciating, in reviling, in overturning the Gospel, with the more malicious spite and vehemence. One might have expected the thunder to roll over our heads, and the bolt of fire to strike and

consume the blaspheming tongue. But God forbears; and shall man be impatient? I suppressed my rising indignation; and combining his broken and disjointed sentences, I proceeded, as calmly as I could, and as far as seemed necessary, to refute them.

But first I said, "I perceive, Sir, (and I perceive it with deep unaffected sorrow) what wretched books have been your study; you have been learning only in the ignorant and impious school of Paine and Carlile; you have drank down their poison, without trying or searching for the antidote.—God forgive both *them* and *you*! One indeed is gone to his everlasting account; his destiny is fixed; and I pray not for him.—The other, in prison, atones for the offended laws of his country and his God; I pray for *him*, and I pray for *you*; that it may please infinite Goodness to prolong your existence, and to mitigate your sufferings, that you may have both time and power, to make your peace with God, through Christ, before you die."

I was naturally raised above the tone of conversation; and I was willing to think that he was somewhat awe-struck by the solemnity and the devotion of my appeal to Heaven for him. However, I continued; "the greater part of your objections are the most trite and hackneyed imaginable; they have been advanced by every caviller or reviler, and they have been answered and refuted by every Christian writer, who has condescended to notice them. Some of them, which are mere blasphemies and not arguments, I shall now pass by in total silence; others also I shall not trouble myself to reply to formally, because I am convinced that you are not swayed by them yourself; the remainder, which have a faint shadow of plausibility about them, I will attack and demolish. I speak confidently; but at the same time, I entreat that when you are not satisfied, you will interpose, and say so.

"One of your objections is, that the Gospel cannot be from God, because it is so recent and not universal. If it be of such vast importance to mankind, why was it not revealed sooner, and why not to all?—All have alike souls to be saved, and, therefore, all are alike concerned.—Is this the force of your objection?" He assented.

"Now tell me then," I said, "whether God be the creator of the world?" "I allow it," was his answer. "Did he create it in some definite period of time, or from all eternity?" I asked. He confessed, from what he had seen of men and of the world itself in his various and extensive travels, that it could not be eternal. "Suppose then," I said, "a person should object that the world was not created by God, because it was of comparatively so late an origin; you see there would be no truth in the objection. And although God intended in creating a new world to communicate happiness to his creatures, might he not have had wise reasons for creating it no earlier, whether we can discover those reasons or not?"

Must he not indeed, as he is infinitely wise, have had the wisest reasons for doing what he did at the time he did it?"

The sick man could not deny it. "Apply then," I said, "the same reasoning to the case of the Christian revelation; and why should we draw a different conclusion? In fact, it is not analogous to the rest of the dealings of Providence, to communicate any particular gift, although it may have an evident tendency to increase the happiness of mankind, so early as we might think most suitable to the divine goodness; but in the case of Christianity men were actually not prepared for the reception of it in any earlier period. It could not have been understood at the time; it could not have been proved to after ages. God however has graciously made the benefits of it applicable to all ages, as well antecedent as subsequent to the delivery of it. In the plans of infinite wisdom and goodness the Lamb was slain from the foundations of the world; and the atonement for sin, which was made by his blood, has extended to every man, who acted according to his natural light, and trusted in God. Meanwhile, preparation was made for the actual introduction of the Gospel; by setting apart the Jews for the worship of the one true God; by committing to their care and study numerous promises and prophecies relating to that Gospel; and by disposing and ordering the affairs of other nations in such a manner as to make them facilitate and concur in the establishment of it. In short, Sir, it would require a volume fully to explain this matter, and to give the glory which is due to its great Author; but this simple outline is quite enough to open any man's eyes to view the subject in its proper light, and to induce him to confess, that a mere general objection against the Gospel, on the ground of the lateness of the promulgation of it, is both weak and untenable."

Mr. Waring indeed was not so candid as to make this confession; but by his silence he admitted that he had nothing to say to the contrary; and I therefore went on: "The Gospel, you object, has not been preached to all mankind—But could it have been preached to all mankind at once?" "He allowed, that it required time and opportunity to do it, if it were to be done by men. "God," I said, "certainly seems to have left it to be done by men, and without any supernatural aid. If men therefore are negligent, or lukewarm about it, he will charge it to their account. However it is manifest, that Christianity has a tendency to increase, which is not the case with any other religion. In your various travels, have you ever visited any country, however remote or uncivilized, in which there were not Missionaries established to introduce the Gospel?" He confessed that he had not, so far as his inquiries extended. "The Gospel, therefore," I thus went on, "is not stationary, and men are trying to spread it; whether rapidly or slowly, it matters not for the argument. I believe from the prophecies, that hereafter it

will be offered and made known to the whole world; and if some thousands of years were to elapse before that event took place, such a period, however large in our estimation, might be nothing in comparison with the duration of time. A thousand years in the sight of God are but as one day. In the meanwhile, all the nations to which the Gospel is not preached, are in no worse situation, than all the world before the first preaching of it; and many at this present moment seem quite unfit for it; and must first be disposed for the reception of it, through the good providence of God, by their intercourse with Christian nations, and by the introduction of arts and civility amongst them. Your objection therefore has no weight in it whatever."

By this time I had discovered, that I was never to expect from Mr. Waring an ingenuous confession, that he was in the wrong. His manner was, when he had nothing more at hand upon any point under discussion, immediately to pass on to another; and I was compelled to follow him. Yet I hoped that a considerable effect must ultimately and almost imperceptibly be produced upon his mind, when he observed, which he could not fail to do, that all his arguments were capable of a ready answer; that, consequently, there was not *that* weight in them, which he originally supposed; and that in point of fact they were all beaten to the ground, and he himself had nothing to say in their defence.

On the present occasion he recurred to his mass of cavils, which he had heaped up before, and hastily reiterated his belief, that the New Testament was written three hundred years after the time when the events related are pretended to have taken place; and consequently that there was no sufficient ground for trust in such a book. Here a wide field was opened for discussion and explanation; and it seemed a hopeless matter, not only to bring my answer within moderate limits, but also to induce him to give credit to my assertions; for part of my answer could not, in the nature of things, be more than assertion merely.

However, I began with asking, why he conceived the New Testament to have been written so recently. "Oh! Sir," he replied at once, and positively, "it is a well known fact.—It has been affirmed again and again, and I have not heard it once contradicted." "That may easily be," I said, "if you read only the books on one side of the question. And now I see, by your case, that the Infidel writers are not so unskilful as I took them to be. I could not imagine why they should venture, so often as they do, to assert the most decided and barefaced falsehoods: but I now see, that they are right in presuming, that many of their readers will give them implicit credit, and not trouble themselves to inquire whether their assertions are true or false. I am sorry to perceive, Sir, that you have acted in this manner.—But tell me, have you not as good rea-

son to believe *me*, as to believe Paine, or Carlile, or any other of the same stamp? They have, an interest, or think they have in deceiving mankind. Have I any interest in deceiving *you*; whom I look upon as a dying man?"

"I do not see that you have," he answered.—"Well, then, I assert the contrary;" I said, "I assert that the Gospel was written very soon after the events recorded in it—Will you believe *me*, or them?" "As you tell me," he replied, "that I have been wrong hitherto in believing without examination persons whom, however, I thought credible; I should like to hear what reasons you have for your assertion." "By all means," I rejoined, "You shall have my reasons: but still you must give me credit for the truth of much of what I shall advance; unless God should spare your life, and enable you to search for yourself, and thus to verify my facts. Indeed to do it thoroughly, you should be acquainted with the Greek language, in which the New Testament was originally written; and you should devote no little labour to the perusal and study of large and voluminous works in that and other languages. But if you are content to put so much trust in *me*, as one man does in another, in the common transactions of the world, where there can be no probable cause for deceit; I could mention enough to set your mind at ease upon this question in a few minutes." "Well, well, Sir," said he; "be as short as you please; and I will give you credit for honesty."

"What more then could you expect," I inquired, "to prove, that any book was written at any particular time, than that other authors, writing upon subjects connected with it, at subsequent periods, beginning from that very time, had mentioned the book, or extracted passages from it?" "To be sure," he confessed, "if that were the case with respect to the New Testament, it would go a great way towards ascertaining the age of it." "*That* is precisely the case," I said. "There exists a series of writers, from the age immediately following that of the appearance of Jesus Christ, and the preaching of his apostles, down to the time when you assert that the New Testament first appeared; which writers clearly refer to the New Testament, as a book then in being, or to some one or other of the Gospels or Epistles, which constitute that book; and they quote more or less from it, as it suited their purpose; so that no doubt can reasonably remain about its identity. A learned man has taken the pains to go through all those writers; to point out the particular age of each; and actually to produce the very quotations themselves which they made from the Scriptures. I could tell you *his* name and *their* names, if it were any use to do it. If these things be so then, can any person but the most determined and hardened sceptic, require more evidence?"

Without yielding, my antagonist immediately put the question rather triumphantly, "But have any Heathen Writers spoken of

this book? I should wish to know *that*. The testimony of enemies would be more convincing than the testimony of friends.” “Yes,” I replied eagerly. “But would enemies continue to be enemies, if they were well acquainted with the origin and history of the Gospel? Would they not immediately become friends, and then give their testimony as friends? This was in fact the case with many. They were educated in Paganism, and prejudiced against Christianity; but having been induced by its extraordinary effects to inquire into its evidences, and to study the sacred writings, they were convinced; they were converted; they wrote in its defence; they sacrificed their lives in its cause. There were however some writers, not Christians, who do not indeed mention the New Testament; which was either impossible on account of their age, or not to be expected on account of their opinions, but who record important circumstances relating to Christianity which are striking evidences of its truth. And it might be also, sometimes, that the silence of a particular author would be a better proof than almost any thing he could have said; but it would take up too much time to set this matter in a full clear light. The writers however to whom I allude are eminent; Suetonius, Tacitus, Juvenal, Pliny, and Josephus. In short it is not to be doubted but that the New Testament was written as soon as might be expected after the events which it records, some parts earlier, some parts later, as the several writers thought it expedient; and it is manifest by a thousand circumstances, that these writers, who were perfectly acquainted with the main facts of the case, could neither have been deceived themselves, nor have had any wish to deceive others. But if their accounts be true, Christianity is true. The question is settled at once.”

I paused; he answered after a little thought, and with somewhat diminished acrimony; “Yes, yes, I grant it, if the accounts be true, whenever written; but who can bring himself to believe such accounts? Miracles, for instance; and such miracles! Can any mortal, not entirely bereft of reason, believe the miracle of the Devils and the swine?”

“We will see,” I said. “But you object to all miracles?” “I do,” was his reply. “Why?” I inquired. “Does God, the Almighty, want power to perform a miracle?” “No; I will not assert *that*,” he answered. “But, as I observe all things proceeding now-a-days, in their regular course, according to natural causes, I feel convinced that it has been always so; and that God never altered that course, and will never alter it, for the sake of performing a miracle.”

“But suppose,” I said, “that God should wish to send a message to mankind; how would the messenger be known to come from *him*, and with *his* authority? When Kings or States send Ambassadors to each other, the Ambassadors verify their commission by undeniable instruments or documents, sealed with the arms of those Kings or

States; and these they call their credentials. Now what credentials must God give to *his* Ambassadors to obtain reception for them, and to awaken due attention to his message? What so simple, what so convincing, as a portion of his own power, exceeding the power of man? The credentials indeed must be something miraculous. Nothing conformable to the established laws of nature could possibly attest the extraordinary presence of God. If the messenger came surrounded with the utmost worldly pomp and grandeur; if he spake as never man spake, with the most persuasive and commanding eloquence; if he lived such a life as to exemplify all the noblest and most difficult moral virtues; it would not prove incontestably that God was with him. No! Divine power is the only direct and irrefragable evidence of a divine message; so that in this case you see miracles are agreeable to reason, and by no means contrary to it."

He was silent; and I was fearful, lest, to evade my argument, he should have denied the possibility or probability of any revelation whatever; which would have led to an interminable discussion; but he pursued a different course, and after a while, collecting himself to speak, he said, "Dr. Warton, I have been in many parts of the world; and, it is true, wherever I was, I saw that some religion or other had got hold of the affections of the people. But, in general, these religions were so absurd and foolish, that their falsehood appeared at once. Yet there were none of them which did not pretend to have their miracles. But these miracles were certainly all impostures; and therefore I fell into the conclusion that no miracles were true; which is the safest conclusion to abide by after all."

"Your conclusion was a very hasty one," I replied, "and contrary to all just reasoning, and far from being safe. You should rather have argued, that, as religion was natural to mankind; (for you saw it every where) and as mankind were equally disposed to believe in miracles; (for you met with no religion which did not boast of its miracles) so the probability would be, that some religion might be true, and some miracles attesting that religion true also. From whence you should have gone on to try the Christian religion and its miracles more especially, as being received in your own country, and involving questions of inconceivable moment, by the proper tests for the ascertainment of their truth or falsehood. Miracles, it is plain, are agreeable to the common sense of mankind; and you have allowed already that they are not impossible; it follows therefore that you ought to examine what testimony there is in their favour, when so great an interest is at stake, and when they are brought forward to prove the truth of a religion which sets life or death before you."

He had nothing to say to all this; and I did not think it wise to press him with questions, to his own confusion; which might have increased his obstinacy; so I went on thus: "The miracles

indeed of Pagan Nations, and the modern miracles of the Papists are for the most part confuted by their own inherent absurdities, or by the want of a sufficient cause for the interference of the Almighty; but the Christian miracles, wrought for the purpose of introducing Christianity, and proving it to be from God, had the worthiest cause, and were generally in their own nature noble instances of goodness and mercy as well as of power. What think you of healing the sick, of feeding the hungry, of making the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the blind to see, the dead to rise? And all this by a word, or a touch? Have you not here two stamps of divinity impressed upon those miracles, power and goodness?"

He could not deny it, but he interposed, that this was not the character of them all. "Perhaps not," I said; "but it is the character of so large a portion of them, as naturally to dispose us in favour of the rest. And what are the rest? the blasting of the fig-tree, the finding of the tribute-money in the fish's mouth, the walking upon the sea, the subduing of the storm, when the sovereign Author of nature, with that voice which all nature hears and obeys, said to the winds and waves, 'Peace! be still! and immediately there was a great calm?' Is there any thing absurd in these miracles to discredit them at once? Were they a mere ostentation of power? Or were they not performed most aptly and seasonably, and all but one so as to strike the disciples with additional awe of their Master, and thereby to increase their faith in him?"

"Yes! Sir," he replied; "it may be so with respect to those which you have selected; but you say nothing of the miracle of the Devils and the swine, to which I objected from the first; and which you cannot explain, and therefore appear to me to evade—Look to that, Sir!" he continued somewhat triumphantly. "*That* is the point, upon which I wait for information." You shall have it immediately," I answered. "Only I would have you take notice, that if I were unable to explain that miracle so fully and clearly as I have explained the others, it would not help your argument. Is it reasonable, that a single difficulty, or many difficulties, should destroy at once the effect of every thing else, which is so perfectly plain and simple?"

He would not say that it was; but he was sure, that where there were difficulties, there would always be doubts; and as to possession by Devils, he thought the whole story incredible. "Do you believe," I asked, "that there are such beings as evil spirits?" "I am rather inclined to think that there are not," was his answer. "Are you aware," I asked again, "that all nations, in all times, as far as we can know, have believed in the existence of supernatural Beings both good and bad?" "I am aware of it," he replied, "and indeed I myself observed in my travels, that the religion of

some nations was chiefly the result of their fear of bad spirits." "The belief then of the existence of Beings of superior power to men, and inclined to be mischievous to men, being universal, is natural to the human mind; is it not?" I inquired. He granted that it was. "Well then," I continued, "*that* is a presumption at least that there really are such Beings; and I, who believe the fact to be so, believe also, that one way in which the idea became so prevalent as to appear natural, is by tradition from the first ages of the world; and I am sure that the account given of those Beings in the Scriptures is a most consistent account, and the only rational one to be found any where; namely, that they were made originally by the great Creator of the same rank with the Angels themselves, and gifted with the same excellent endowments, and put into possession of the same bliss and glory; that, being free to stand or fall, they fell by voluntary transgression from this their first estate; that, since their fall, they have been permitted by Providence to tempt mankind to sin for the trial and illustration of human faith and virtue; and that ultimately, together with incorrigible wicked men, who deny the Lord that bought them, they will be cast into a lake of unextinguishable fire." He shuddered at the latter part of my account; but said nothing. I therefore proceeded.

"But to come to the miracle. I believe that in the first age of the Gospel these Devils were permitted to torment the bodies as well as to tempt the passions and appetites of men; one purpose of which was, to show, what perhaps could not have been shown otherwise, that Jesus Christ who cast them out, had a power superior to theirs; and thus to raise the faith of the true Christian to a full and perfect confidence that the kingdom of darkness would finally be overthrown by the same power, and the kingdom of righteousness established upon its ruins for ever. However, there might have been then, as there are now, persons who thought that the sick people, afflicted by the Devil, as we say, upon Scripture authority, were not really so; but that they laboured under imaginary disorders of the mind, which they themselves, in the paroxysms of their madness, interpreted in that manner. Now, I ask you, is it possible, do you think, for irrational animals to be troubled with diseases of the imagination?" He allowed that it was not possible. "It would perhaps then," I continued, "be no bad method of showing that these afflictions, which we call possessions by Devils, were not disorders of the imagination, if it were seen that irrational animals were also affected by them." He was aware of the drift of my reasoning, and therefore, as he could not controvert it after his former concession, he remained silent, and left me to draw the conclusion, that, besides other reasons for sending the Devils into the swine, this might have been one, that it proved the exercise of a real power by those Beings which was subject to the

power of Christ. This visible conquest over Satan was, in fact, the beginning to bruise the Serpent's head, and an earnest of his future complete destruction, according to the earliest prophecy delivered in Paradise for the consolation of our first parents, and the confirming of the faith of their whole posterity.

Here I thought it advisable to close the conversation for the present. It was wonderful indeed that the sick man could have supported his part in it so long. In body however he was certainly not worse than when we began; in mind there was a sensible alteration for the better; and I tacitly besought God, that he would give me the time, and also enable me, to enlighten and convince him still further, that he might die in the true and steadfast faith of Christ. I refrained from asking him how far I had already succeeded. He was not yet ripe for confessions. He would perhaps have denied that any change had taken place in his opinions; but upon the whole it was sufficiently apparent, and I contented myself with remarking it in silence. I now took my leave with a promise that I would be with him on the following day, which he seemed to receive with pleasure, and which he acknowledged with thanks.

I visited him according to my engagement, and was surprised to find a man, whom the day before I supposed to be dying, now seated in his chair as at the first, and breathing with much more freedom. In fact, the water had been astonishingly diminished; and in consequence he had obtained some comfortable rest in the night, and was now enjoying this temporary ease. But there was no reason to think that it could be more than temporary; and therefore, in congratulating him upon the pause of his disorder, I still kept in view the certainty that it must terminate fatally. "God," I said, "has been gracious to you, and has spared you another day for the momentous work in which you are employed. Whilst the day lasts, let us be diligent in the use of it; for the night cometh, when no man can work. Yesterday, when I entered your chamber, your life seemed to hang upon a single thread, and I expected to see it snap asunder. The same danger may return, you know not how soon; God grant that you may be well prepared to meet it! Shall I kneel down therefore, and thank God for his present mercy, and beg his future help, in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, whom he has appointed to be the only Mediator between men and himself?"

This proposition I made to try him, and that I might not contend in the dark with respect to his actual sentiments. For he showed no disposition to give me any positive information about himself expressly by words; I could only judge by deeds and casual circumstances; nor had I seen Mrs. Waring this morning, so as to

get any information from her on this interesting point. I was not a little grieved therefore, when, instead of accepting my offer to pray for him, he resumed his cavils, by saying, "that he could never digest the doctrine of the Mediator between God and men; and *that* Mediator the Son of God himself; and *him* too crucified, dead, and buried. There is something, he asserted, so strange, so incredible, so contradictory to reason, in the whole scheme and idea of it, that even undoubted miracles could never prove it."

Alas! alas! thought I; then must I buckle on my armour afresh, to encounter a new series of objections; and waste, perhaps irrecoverably, and in fruitless disputation, the precious hours that should have been spent in earnest prayer for grace and pardon. However, I could only follow where *he* led me; and at least it was satisfactory to observe that he spoke no longer with the same sneering sarcastic tone of voice, or with the same apparent malice of heart, as when he first heaped upon me the whole mass of his crudities. His present objection was then put in a form which I should be shocked to record; now it was expressed with moderation. I did not therefore permit myself to despair; but, on the contrary, pleased and encouraged myself with the hope that another day might, by God's blessing, produce a still more remarkable change.

I said therefore, "Suppose you had a favour to ask of the king's chief minister, upon whom however you had no claim whatever; and suppose also, that you happened to be acquainted with a person of inferior rank, but high in influence with that minister; would you apply directly to the great man yourself, or through the person who was the common friend of both?"—"I should apply," he answered, "through the common friend."—"He would be your mediator then," said I, "would he not?"—"He certainly would," was his reply. "And is not this," I continued, "the common practice of mankind, where they who have favours to grant are far above them, and out of their reach, as it were, to endeavour to prevail upon some other person or persons to mediate for them; that is, to go between the parties which are at a distance, and approximate them to each other, and thus to accomplish the wished-for object?" He allowed that it was. "And more especially," I added, "if you had offended the superior man by your conduct, and had reason to think that he would punish you, instead of favouring you; would you venture to approach him under such circumstances, and boldly ask him to do you some great kindness?"—"I would not," he said.—"But if a friend of yours," thus I went on, "should voluntarily undertake to go to the great man for you, and should bid you to have good hope of success, in spite of the unpromising nature of your case, because that he himself would be your Advocate and Mediator, and that the great man never refused him any thing; should you not be overpowered with joy? Should you not ac-

cept so unexpected and advantageous an offer with the utmost gratitude?"—"Undoubtedly, I ought to do so," was his answer. "Well then," I continued, as I summed up my argument, "this is pretty much the case between God and men. The parties are at an immense distance. One lies under the displeasure of the other, and yet looks up to that other for inestimable benefits. Glad therefore ought we to be, supremely glad, that there is another person at hand, willing to undertake and able to effect a reconciliation between them. This, then, is the Christian scheme; according, you see, with the common reason of mankind."

My adversary was silent, as heretofore, when the argument appeared to be against his positions; but his hostility was manifestly relaxed, and he no longer seemed to think that he had lost any thing, when his assertions were overturned. I therefore proceeded: "Now if this intermediate person were of such a description as to be a natural connecting link between the parties, would he not be admirably adapted to the office? If for instance, he were perfectly acquainted with all the circumstances of both, by his own experience too, would not *that* be a vast advantage?" He granted that it would. "Well then," I said, "could any one know the two parties better than *he*, who has the nature of both?"—"Probably not," he replied. "Here again, then," I rejoined, "you have the Christian scheme of a Mediator, who is both God and man, consistent, as you perceive, with the deductions of your best reason."—"Yes," said he: "but was this God crucified? Did he die? Was he buried? Is not all this incredible?"—"It would indeed be incredible," I answered, "that God, simply as God, should suffer crucifixion and death. But you must recollect, that Christ, being God by nature, became man, in order that, as man, he might be capable of being put to death. In his divine nature he could not die; in his human he might: and it is easy to understand, that the death of such a person, although he died only as man; yet having the divine nature also, must have been of extraordinary value, and have drawn mighty consequences after it; and these, we affirm, are no less than the reconciliation to God the Father of a whole world lost in trespasses and sins."

"We are surrounded with difficulties at every step," said the sick man. "Precisely as we might expect," I replied, interrupting him. "If God should reveal any thing to us, would it be likely to be something which we knew already?" He allowed that it would not. "Or any thing that we could certainly discover by a due use of our own reason?" I inquired again. He was obliged to confess that we might naturally expect the things revealed to be beyond our reason. "Why then," I said, "should we stumble at difficulties? In fact, if there were none, we could hardly believe *that* which was without them to be expressly revealed from Heaven. Besides, are there not difficulties innumerable in the natural

world?"—"There are, undoubtedly," he answered. "But still you believe God to be the author of nature; do you not?"—"I do," he said. "Why then be inconsistent with yourself, and with a just analogy, by denying him to be the Author of revelation, because it has difficulties in it?"

"Here being rather pushed by the argument, he said, "Yes; but in revelation there are things not simply above our reason, but contradictory to it."—"What are they?" I asked, eagerly. "That God should have a Son," he replied; and that one should be three, and three one. Are not all such things contradictory to our reason?"—"They are most certainly above and beyond it," I said; "but, as we know so little of heavenly things, it would be going too far to pronounce that they are contradictory to it. Indeed, if you mean that one person cannot be three persons, nor three persons one, you are in the right; but this has nothing to do with our doctrine, which is, that there are three persons and one God. You would be right again, if you meant, that one could not be three, nor three one, in the same respects; but this also is what we do not assert. In fact, we assert only what we find in Scripture. And, observe, we are not concerned to understand the mode in which any thing, asserted there, may possibly exist; but to show our docility and submission, by embracing what we find, as true, and by applying it to the purposes for which it may appear to have been revealed. If we were required to understand what we are incapable of understanding with our present faculties, we should be hardly dealt with; but God only requires us to believe; and, I presume, you will allow, that there are an almost infinite variety of things which we believe without understanding them." He could not deny it. "Well then," I continued, "what we actually find in Scripture is this: that there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; to each of whom is ascribed the name of God, or the attributes and operations of the Godhead; whilst we are told, at the same time, again and again, that there is but one God. Now there seems to be no way of reconciling the two assertions together but by supposing that these three persons are some how or other united in the same nature. This is the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity; dark and mysterious, without question; a doctrine, which the humblest, and the most lofty towering genius, are equally unable to scan; but it may be abundantly instructive nevertheless, and especially it may be intended to exercise our faith; for in this world, whether we like it or not, we must of necessity walk by faith, and not by sight."

Here I paused to allow Mr. Waring to speak, if he wished to do so. He was buried for some time in profound thought; and then he looked up, as if he expected me to proceed. I was aware that something yet remained, and therefore I resumed my discourse—

“You may desire, perhaps,” I said, “to hear more of these three persons; and particularly in what manner the Son is derived from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from both. But it would be a vain thing to attempt to sound the depths of these mysteries; and if they were as clear as the sun at noon-day, it is not easy to see that we should be the better for such knowledge. With respect to the Holy Ghost, indeed, there is really no ground to speculate upon at all; but the very name of Son opens a field for speculation in the case of Jesus Christ; and from what we know of sonship amongst ourselves, we might be led to suppose that the Sonship of Christ resulted from something analogous to human generation; a revolting idea with regard to God. But a moment’s consideration convinces us that the analogy, although holding in some respects, cannot be complete in all; and also there may be a thousand modes of generation, utterly unknown to us, and none of them derogatory from our notions of God, and any one of them producing the relation of Father and Son. At all events the Son was with the Father in the beginning; that is, from all eternity the Father communicated to him the whole perfection of the Godhead. But what is of most importance to us is the practical doctrine arising from this relation between our Saviour and our God, and applicable to ourselves. For if God desired to save us, could he have invented a more endearing method of doing it than by sending his own Son from his bosom to suffer punishment in our stead? Could he have shown his anger against sin more terribly or more effectually than by requiring the death of his own Son as the only adequate atonement for it? And have we not the most forcible motives for loving the Son and obeying his laws, after his wonderful condescension and his painful sufferings in our behalf?”

Mr. Waring appeared, in some measure, to acquiesce in what I had said, but desired me to speak of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, which he thought liable to the grossest interpretations. “It is true,” I answered, “Jesus Christ is the Son of God, both as he is God, and also as he is Man. In this latter sense of the expression we are better informed, because it is absolutely necessary that we should be so; but God forgive those who have attempted to pervert, or to ridicule, this wonderful, this momentous transaction! And mark; the Holy Spirit of God, all-pure himself, and the author of all purity in others, is the Agent in the transaction; which, we might have thought, would have banished at once from the minds of men every sinful unchaste idea, and inspired them with a holy reverence and awe. The Holy Spirit, however, is the Agent, for a wise reason, capable of being estimated by ourselves. The Son of God, that he might be the Saviour of men, was to assume the human nature, with all its infirmities, but was to be free from sin, original and actual. Now, if man had been the instrument of his

Incarnation, he would have brought with him into the world the stain of original stain. He had, therefore, no human father; the Holy Ghost, all whose acts are holy, formed and fashioned the material substance of his body in the womb of the Virgin. Whilst that body was formed and fashioned, it was purified also by the Divine grace and influence of the Maker, and thus became the glorious temple of every virtue, without a single spot or blemish. Is there any thing now in this transaction fit to excite ridicule?" He confessed that there was nothing, when the matter was rightly understood. "On the contrary," I said, "who would not rather fall down, and worship, and adore, when he reads of the sacred Messenger from heaven hailing the Virgin, as highly favoured of the Lord, and announcing to her, that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadow her, for the production of some holy thing which should be called the Son of God! But hear, before I take my leave, a short summary of this whole dispensation—God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; he cannot tolerate in his presence the slightest stain of sin; he dwells in the dazzling splendour of inaccessible light, and even the blessed Angels themselves with their wings veil their faces before him. Man, debased by the fall and by his own transgressions, cannot approach him to ask for pardon and grace; the desire of all nations in all ages has been to find a Mediator. At length in the fulness of the times the Mediator comes, who is the brightness of the divine glory and the express image of the divine person. But through the cloud of mortal frailty he shines with a milder radiance than his Heavenly Father. Incarnate by the Holy Ghost, and under his constant influence, he is utterly devoid of all sin; yet his virtues being human virtues, however high and exalted, they create in us no alarm or apprehension. We come boldly to him for help in time of need. He pleads for us the merits of *that* death, which, being a man, he was enabled to undergo; a death, which was an all-sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, because it was the death of one, who, being in the form of God, emptied himself of his native glories, and exhibited himself in the fashion of a man, and stooped to the ignominy of the Cross. Well then may we think him mighty to save, and accept with confidence his gracious offers of reconciling us to our offended God! Will you be angry with him for his astonishing love towards you? Will you refuse to acknowledge his divine nature, because he took the human? Will you not pray in his name, because he submitted to shame, and spitting, and death, for you?

My zeal would have carried me on still further; but observing some favourable symptoms of remorse in my patient's countenance and manner, and also an inclination to speak, I stopped, and he immediately said; "You have drawn, Sir, it must be granted, a very pleasing picture of the chief features of the Christian religion. I see

many things in a different light from that in which I have been too long accustomed to view them. I am obliged to you for every kindness which you have shown to me during my sickness; but more especially for the pains which you have taken to correct my erroneous notions of Christianity. I cannot, however, undertake to receive the Sacrament at present; but to-morrow, at twelve o'clock, you shall give me, at least, the benefit of your prayers, and I will myself join with you." "I will be with you," I replied, as I rose to go away, "at the time appointed; and, meanwhile, may God send his Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind, and to purify your heart!"

As I pursued my walk in the discharge of other clerical duties, I reflected, with satisfaction, upon the scene which had just passed. We had not, indeed, yet arrived at any practical religious act; but a time close at hand was fixed for a beginning; and a foundation appeared to be laid, which a few days ago seemed utterly hopeless. He had himself mentioned the Sacrament in a most abrupt and unexpected manner. I had said nothing which could have naturally led to it; and I cannot conjecture by what train of thought it occurred to him, or why he spoke of it, as he appeared, for the present at least, to have no intention of receiving it. However, I hoped that his having first mentioned it himself would facilitate my progress hereafter; and I prepared myself by meditation and secret prayer for the probable events of the morrow.

The morrow came, and I hastened to fulfil my engagement; but unavoidable accidents kept me on the road a few minutes beyond the hour of twelve. On entering the house I saw at once the marks of some great calamity. Mrs. Waring hurried down stairs to me; consternation sat upon her countenance. I inquired eagerly what was the matter; and was answered that her husband was dying. "Oh! Sir," she said, "he has been very impatient for your arrival. He has asked again and again if it were twelve o'clock.—Again and again he has expressed a great alarm lest you should not be here in time." I rushed up stairs, much disturbed, and struck with awe at the doings of the Almighty. Here was a striking instance of the wretched weakness of man, and of *his* irresistible power. Mr. Waring, yesterday so much better and stronger, with the prospect of some weeks at least before him; and so far renewed in the spirit of his mind as to have appointed this day and this hour for the commencement of religious exercises, was stretched upon the bed of death, and now almost a lifeless corpse. His eyes were closed; his face was black and ghastly; his throat gurgled horribly, as the breath forced a passage through it. I seized his hand, and pressed it. He opened his eyes convulsively, and shut them instantly. He attempted to speak, but no intelligible sounds escaped from his lips. Nevertheless his mind was manifestly not yet gone; and I hoped that he still possessed the sense of hearing. I knelt down, there-

fore, and began in a loud and solemn tone that most beautiful, affecting, and divine prayer, which is prescribed for the sick at the point of their departure. His lips moved, as if he were trying to accompany me. This sign of God's gracious goodness towards him, in the midst of his dreadful agony, for a moment overpowered me, and of necessity I stopped. He began to speak, and I put my head close to catch his words. He said, "It is very comfortable to me;" and that was all which I could distinctly understand. It was evident that he did not finish the sentence which he intended; for he began over and over again in the same words. When he had entirely ceased, I resumed the prayer; his lips moved again for a short time, and then became motionless altogether. I grasped his hand, and asked him, if he died in the faith of Jesus Christ. He gave me no sign. Unwilling to witness his last moments, I withdrew; ejaculating to Heaven a petition for the salvation of his soul, and at length relieved by tears.

CHAPTER II.

MR. SAMBROOK—ATHEISM.

As I was sitting at home one rainy day, and earnestly engaged in the preparation of a sermon for the following Sunday, expecting that the weather would have secured me from all chance of being disturbed by visitors, the name of Mr. Sambrook was announced. He was a considerable farmer, with whom I had long wished to have an opportunity of conversing, and which I had totally despaired of obtaining, unless it might please Providence to inflict some lingering calamity upon him. I was well aware that the object of his present visit was entirely secular; but I hoped to extract something spiritual out of it, and therefore put by my papers with great satisfaction, and desired that he might be brought into my study.

A short, fat, rosy man, beyond the middle age, was introduced. His dress and manner were rough for a person having so much intercourse with the neighbouring town; but there was a liveliness and cheerfulness in his whole air and gestures, which induced me at once to think that I might say what I chose to him, consistently with my situation, without the danger of giving him offence. And certainly it seemed necessary that much should be said: at Church I never had seen him; he was accused of acts of uncommon profligacy, and he was bringing up his family in an absolute neglect of all religion. Having thus estranged himself from my spiritual ministrations, he assumed that he was emancipated from the payment of tithes; and, in fact, I was compelled to file a bill against him in the Exchequer, which now brought him to the rectory; for he did not love law, although he seldom did what was just without it; and indeed he loved it the less, because it sometimes forced him to do justice.

"I am come to you, Sir," he said, as I rose to meet him, "about this Exchequer business." I desired him to sit down, and I sat down myself near him. "I did not think, Sir," he began again, "that you would have been so harsh with me, as to exchequer me."—"I am sorry," I answered, "that you have made it necessary. My lawyer informed me that there was no other way of settling the account. Did he not write to you upon the subject

long ago?" He allowed it. "How many times?" I inquired. He could not say how many times; but I knew that he had written often. "Have you ever seen him?" I inquired again. "Yes," he said. "When?" I asked. "I think it is a year ago," he replied. "And did you not then fix a time for the settlement?"—"Why, to be sure I did," was his answer. "But you did not fulfil your promise, I suppose, by the event. Did he write to you again, when the day had passed, to remind you?"—"I cannot deny but he did," said Mr. Sambrook, very unwillingly, and not at all pleased with this system of questioning and answering, which only compelled him to condemn himself out of his own mouth. However, I proceeded. "You went to him, I presume, when matters were come to this extremity?" Roused at last, he exclaimed, "No, I did not, Sir. Indeed we are so *oppressed* with tithes in this parish, that there is no bearing it."—"I was not aware," I replied coolly, "of any oppression. Pray tell me how much you have paid since I became Rector."—"I cannot justly say, at a moment's notice," was his answer. "Have you paid one hundred pounds?" I asked. "Not so much as that," he replied. "Have you paid twenty pounds?" I asked again. "I cannot tell," he answered, "without looking at my receipts."—"Come now," I said, "be open and candid; have you ever paid me any thing?" He looked down, ashamed and speechless. I pressed him; "You know, Mr. Sambrook, it is a very easy matter for me to ascertain the truth, by a reference to my tithe-agent. He assures me that he has called at your house so often, that he is quite weary of it; and that he has never been able to obtain any money from you, nor any account of the produce of the land which you occupy. Is this true? Have you ever paid a farthing? Speak honestly." At last he answered, "That, upon turning the matter over in his mind, he could not recollect that he had ever paid any thing."—"Well then," I said, "Mr. Sambrook, *you* at least seem to have no reason to complain of being oppressed by tithes."—"Yes, Sir," he replied, "but this business has always been hanging over my head, and disturbing me, and keeping me in hot water. One day your collector calls; the next day comes a lawyer's letter; and perhaps a few days after you write yourself."—"A pretty strong proof," I said, "that we have done every thing to avoid law, and to put you to the least possible expense; but, notwithstanding every warning, you denied me what I conceived to be my dues. You would not listen indeed to any amicable proposition, and therefore the evil day has at length overtaken you. I fear the filing of the bill will cost you ten pounds, without proceeding any further."—"Oh, Sir!" he exclaimed eagerly, "I hope you have no intention of going any further. What do I owe you?"—"If we were to go any further," I said, "the court would call upon you to declare on oath the quantity of your

land, and the mode of tillage; but you may give me a written statement, if you please, and I will be satisfied with your word of honour.”—“I have one in my pocket,” he replied; “here it is.” I took it, and examined it; and soon discovered several errors, not to say wilful falsehoods. I pointed them out, and a discussion arose, which ended in various amendments of the statement; and then, upon calculating the debt, I found that it exceeded one hundred pounds. “If I am required to pay such a sum as that,” he cried out, “I had better go to jail.”—“And what good will that do to yourself or your family?” I inquired. “It is ruin either way,” he said; “I trust you will take a much smaller sum.”—“If I do,” I replied, “it will be liable to this mischief: all, who pay with difficulty at present, will hold back so much the longer, expecting to profit by it in the end; and all who pay honourably, will think perhaps that they have acted unwisely; unless they know, as I am almost sure that some do, the infinite satisfaction which springs up in the mind from the consciousness of just dealing. However, I will run this risk. What are you willing to pay?” Mr. Sambrook hemmed and hawed for some time, and at last proposed forty pounds. I closed with him instantly; upon which he began to think that if he had offered less, I would have taken less: at least he enumerated a hundred difficulties in the way of the payment of so large a sum, as he called it; but I stood firm, and the final agreement was, that he should pay all the expenses incurred, and the forty pounds by instalments.

This weighty matter then being settled, and with the advantage on my side of having made a large concession, I now said, “Mr. Sambrook, if you would but come to Church, you would not perhaps grudge me my tithes; you might be inclined to adopt the opinion, that the labourer is worthy of his hire.”—“No, Sir,” he answered at once, and eagerly, “nothing could ever reconcile me to tithes. Excuse me, Dr. Warton; I mean no personal disrespect to yourself. I think all tithes unjust and vexatious; and all who take them little better than robbers.”—This he pronounced vehemently. “But they are established by the laws of the land; are they not?” I inquired. “Aye; there’s the rub,” he answered; “but the law itself robs me in a hundred ways.”—“If,” said I, “a man takes only what the law allows him, I do not see how he can be properly called a robber.”—“What!” he replied, “if I plough, and manure, and sow, and reap, all at my own single expense, and another steps in, and, without having done any thing, takes away one-tenth part of what I have raised by the labour of my hands, is not that a robbery, I ask you?”—“And I ask you, in return,” I said, “what you think of the landlord; is he a robber too?” He hesitated, and so I proceeded. “The landlord neither labours, nor spends money upon the raising of the crops, and yet

steps in and takes, I believe, a quarter of your produce. What say you to that? Is it a robbery or not?" He still hesitated; at length he said—"To speak the truth, I have no partiality for rents any more than for tithes. But the landlord has something to say for himself; the land is his, and he lets it under the condition of receiving a rent, rather than cultivate it himself; the farmer enters of his own will into a bargain with the landlord, and therefore has no reason to complain of the rent, unless there be any unusual circumstances in the case." "Nothing can be more just," I replied, "than the account which you have given of the transaction; except perhaps what you said, 'that the land was his.' It is his certainly in one sense, but not altogether his, except under a condition. How does he become possessed of it?"—"He bought it, perhaps," was his answer; "or it came to him from his father." "True," I said; "but, whether he bought it, or it came to him from his father, he obtained it, and he holds it, subject to tithes. Did not he or his ancestor pay a smaller price for it than should have been paid, if it had been free from tithes?" He could not deny it. "They did not therefore purchase, and consequently could not possess, the whole power over the land, but only the power of appropriating to themselves nine-tenths of the produce?" He was obliged to allow it. "So that they could not convey to their tenants any right which they did not possess themselves?" Seeing the difficulties in which he was involved, he confessed it reluctantly. "And in point of fact, I said, and in your own case, when you took your land, did not you know perfectly all these circumstances?" He was uneasy, and unwilling to answer; so I went on. "Did not you indeed argue with your landlord, and try to get an abatement of your rent, by pleading that there would be rates and tithes to pay, and consequently that the land was only worth so much?" He was pinched to the quick; I forced him, however, to confess that he did not know but that he had done so. "The question then comes to this," I said, "whether the rent and the tithe together amount to more than the rent would be, if there were no tithe. I do not mean in your case; because it seems you adjusted the proportions previously, and therefore must have been satisfied. But, speaking generally, and upon supposition that all tithes were restored to the landlords, could this be any benefit to the tenants? Would not the landlords charge something for the superior value of the lands?"—"I must confess," he answered, "they would be fools if they did not; but I have no doubt the tenants would gain by it."—"How?" I asked; "the landlords would charge the full value of the tithes; would they not? Is there any reason to suppose that they care so little about their own interests, as to take less than the worth of the thing? But, on the other hand, who ever heard of the Parson getting the full value of his tithes? What is your own case? You

ought to pay me one-third of the rent, by all the common rules of calculation; whereas you do not pay me one-sixth of it. Or, if I reckoned by your expenses in the cultivation of the land, and other incidents, which are perfectly known to me, I am quite confident that you do not pay me more than the half of what you should pay." He shook his head, and seemed to doubt; so I went through the calculations in detail, and proved that they were correct uncontestedly; and therefore the conclusion which I drew could not be avoided; namely, that it was better for the tenants to have to do with the Parson, than with the landlord alone; because there was a great probability that the demands of the Parson on his own share would be moderate, and whatever he consented to loose, the tenants would gain.

"Yes," said Mr. Sambrook, "but I would not restore the tithes to the landlords; I would give them to the nation, for the benefit of the public."—"Out of the frying-pan into the fire!" I replied. "The immediate effect of such a measure must necessarily be to increase the payments of the tenants. For either the nation would sell the tithes to the highest bidder, or appoint commissioners to manage them; in both which cases the very utmost would be made of them; would it not?" This last position of Mr. Sambrook's was the most unfortunate of all; he had not a word to produce in its defence; but he was the more angry, because he was ashamed to discover, with how little show of reason he was able to maintain his principles, and with what ease they were overturned. He made no direct answer to my question, but said, after a moment's hesitation, "Be this as it may, Sir; the origin of tithes was in the dark superstitious ages; and, as I told you before, nothing could be more unjust and vexatious."—"Why unjust, Mr. Sambrook?" I said, "Has not every man a right to give his own, or any part of his own, to whom he will? Had not I a full power and right to give you sixty pounds, which I have just done? My wife and children may be the worse for what I give away from them; but that does not make the thing to be a flagrant case of injustice; does it?"—"Nobody denies all this," he replied; "but what has this to do with tithes?"—"Why," I said, "you cannot surely be ignorant, that tithes, generally speaking, were grants from the owners of the land. For certain advantages in return, which appeared to them of great importance, they set apart for ever a tenth portion of every thing which their land produced. This might have been a bad bargain or not; but certainly not unjust. Perhaps in some cases their children might have fancied that they had cause to complain; but nobody else could reasonably object to it, who had no claim upon the property. Suppose I were to establish myself with all my family in America, and bring a large tract of land into cultivation, and at length build a town, and get together a multitude of people; and

suppose I should think that we might all be the better for some public visible worship of God; should I not have a perfect right to devote any part of my property to such an object? Nobody would presume to dispute the matter with me but my own family; and it is true that they might be somewhat less rich. But what is *that* to *them*? The land is mine and not theirs; I bought it, and brought it to the state in which it now is; and, if to show my gratitude to the Divine Author of my prosperity, and for the spiritual benefit of the population, I give him back a part of his gift, they ought to rejoice in my determination, and probably would do so. Every idea of injustice then is extinguished at once. What have you to object to this?"—"This is plausible, I grant," was his answer; "but he must be a great fool, who should lay such a vexatious burden as tithes upon the holders of his land through all ages."—"I presume," I said, "that you call it vexatious on the supposition that all tithes will be taken in kind; and that a great deal of plague and mischief will arise on that account. But you see that in practice things turn out otherwise: tithes are very rarely taken in kind; and the owner of them, especially if he be a Parson, is contented with a moderate compensation in money. But, at all events, the tenants cannot justly complain; they go with their eyes open; and if there be any thing really vexatious attached to their tenure, they are sure to get an equivalent in the rent. It is ridiculous therefore to talk of injustice and vexation as applicable to *them*? and nobody else but the descendants of the original proprietors have a right to utter a complaint upon the subject; and I am confident also that, all things considered, they have none."

Mr. Sambrook being beaten out of all his assertions, was reduced to silence, and seemed fearful to hazard any thing further. I said, therefore, "Well, Sir, I think I shall send you away in love with tithes, and full of eagerness, in future, to discharge every demand of that kind to the full." He smiled at this little piece of raillery, but answered, "No! no! Sir, this is a system that cannot go on; in spite of all that you may say, these enlightened times will not bear it." "Depend upon it," I rejoined, "the true wisdom is to leave the tithes where they are; for, besides the danger of touching property so ancient, which might create a fear and insecurity with regard to all property; besides the crying injustice of taking away what has belonged to others for so many ages, and violating the intentions of the original donors; it is really for the benefit of the community, for which a little while ago you expressed your anxiety, that the Clergy should possess these tithes rather than any other body of men." "How is that?" he asked. "I will tell you," I said. "I do not claim any merit at present for their religious services; but pray inform me, whether you think it useful to a parish, that money should be spent where it is got?" "I do," was his answer. "You

have probably heard," I continued, "what great calamities have arisen in Ireland from the absence of the chief landed proprietors." "I have," he said; "they draw vast sums of money out of their own country, and spend them, either here, or, which is still worse, abroad." "They do," I replied; "and thus Ireland is impoverished, the stream continually setting away from it, and none returning; the labouring classes cannot find employment; want reduces them to despair, and they become fierce and barbarous." "It is too true," he said. "Well then," I asked, "is not the same naturally to be expected on a smaller scale in every parish here, unless there are counteracting causes? If the money be drawn away, and do not come back in some other shape, must not such a proceeding tend to impoverish the parish?" "Undoubtedly it must," was his answer. "It is, therefore," I said, "for the benefit of a parish, that the money obtained there should be spent there; is it not?" He readily allowed it. "Now then, consider," said I, "what are the circumstances of this parish. Does not the chief land-owner live far away from us? Does he not receive large sums in the shape of rent? Does any part of that money ever come back and circulate here for the good of the tradesmen or the poor?" He granted every thing. "And," I continued, "if he had twice as much as he has, would it not be just the same? Would it not be all spent out of the parish?" He had no doubt it would—"And observe," I said, "I do not mention this as any reproach to that Gentleman, who has a larger estate, and a more suitable house in a distant county, where he lives amongst his tenantry, and does all the good which may be effected by a resident land-owner; but I ask, be he absent voluntarily or of necessity, whether it would not be so far advantageous to this parish to have even the smallest portion of the produce of his land expended here?"—He concurred with me at once; not seeing, I suppose, the conclusion, although a very obvious one, which I was now ready to infer. "This, then," I said, "is the case with respect to the Clergy generally. There may be exceptions; numerous exceptions perhaps, if you do not look to the whole body; but still this is the law, that the Clergy must reside upon their property; and they are induced to do it by the most forcible motives besides. In fact they do generally reside, and spend their fortunes amongst those from whom they are derived. Did you ever hear of my absence?"

"No, Sir," he answered; "I never did: but I can tell you, without meaning any offence, that there are plenty of people in this parish, who would be glad of your absence."—"Very likely," I said; "the people, for instance, that you meet with at the alehouses; the idle, the drunken, the Infidels and Atheists." This retort smote his conscience, and deprived him at once of a short imaginary triumph; so he was more candid than I expected, and confessed,

that he believed it to be my wish to make them all better men, and that he had had opportunities of seeing some good which I had done amongst the poor. He told me also, that he had often said this behind my back, in spite of his hatred of tithes and tithe-owners. "Well," I went on; "do not mind this now; whether I am a good or a bad man, consider me only as a man of property; here I am always, and here I spend every thing. Do not I employ many tradesmen? Do not I consume a great many things produced here? Do not I find a good deal of work for the poor in my garden and grounds, and in the repairs of my house and buildings? For masons, carpenters, painters, glaziers, and others? And is not this so far so good?" He did not attempt to deny it; so I proceeded to conclude, that the same might generally be said of all the Clergy, and consequently, that property could not be placed in better hands. "And we may go," I said, "a step further; for in proportion to their property no set of men, I presume, will pretend to vie with the Clergy in doing good. Although they have often large families, yet they are always ready to contribute to every charity to the full extent of their means, and even beyond; and in their own parishes the assistance which they give to the sick poor, and their expenditure upon schools and other establishments is almost incredible. In many parts of England, and still more so in Ireland, where there are so few resident gentry, the poor have absolutely none but the Clergy to look up to for relief and comfort in their distresses."

Here Mr. Sambrook interrupted me, and said, that if this were true, it was but as it should be; for that by ancient law the Parson was bound to set apart one-third of his tithes for the use of the poor; and he could not but regret that so wise a law had long ceased to be in force. "Such a law," I replied, "in all probability never existed at any time. Certainly there never was any Statute Law to such an effect; and if it had been the Common Law of the Land, it is most likely that it would have still remained. The tithes of this parish were given without any restriction whatever: and the same was the case with most others; but in some cases the owners of the tithes were commanded to be hospitable and charitable; a command which they executed to such an extreme as to produce much more mischief than good, and in fact so as to introduce idleness and beggary to the great detriment of the country. But this was put an end to by the shameful plunder of the Church property, which took place in the sixteenth century; and the noble persons upon whom that plunder was lavished, not choosing to spend so large a part of it on the poor, as the lawful possessors before them had done, the country was overrun with paupers, and thence came the poor-laws; since which time the Clergy with their diminished property have been rated as all others, and in their full

proportion. You will find this, Mr. Sambrook, to be a true account of the matter; so that my former conclusion is not shaken, and the Clergy are proved in every way to be amongst the most beneficial holders of property, of which this happy kingdom can boast.

“Well, well, Sir,” said Mr. Sambrook, “I see you are determined to have all the argument your own way, and there is no debating with you. But I think, nevertheless, that there is no necessity for the Clergy to wallow in wealth. Your first Parsons, such as Peter and Paul, by all accounts, were poor enough, and yet if you believe what is reported of them, they did more good than all the parsons that have lived since, put together.” This was spoken sarcastically, and somewhat triumphantly; as if, after all his former failures, he had at length hit upon something, which turned the tables against me.

“As to the great riches of the Clergy,” I replied, “you may be put down by a simple calculation, which cannot be disputed. It is this. If all the possessions of all the Clergy were divided equally amongst them, they would not furnish more than two hundred pounds a year to each. It is therefore quite absurd to talk of their wallowing in wealth. However, the revenue of the Church is in some respects a lottery, in which there are a few great prizes, to stimulate men of the greatest talents to devote themselves to her service, and to enable them to obtain the same rewards therein as they might have obtained in any other profession. But at all events this was the work of the original donors, to which nobody has a right to object, because nobody can pretend to be injured by it. And I can well conceive those excellent persons arguing with themselves in this manner, when they set apart the tithes for ever for the purposes of religion. ‘We must have men thoroughly educated in all the learning of the times in which they are called by Providence to live; they must be fit for the highest society, and able to cope with persons of the highest attainments; they must be under no necessity of resorting to trades for a maintenance, with which a due respectability would be incompatible; they must not be exposed to the danger of detracting from the sacredness of their characters by the slightest temptation to do any thing mean or base; they must not be exposed to contempt by a ragged coat, or worn out shoes; in short, they must not go about, as Peter and Paul did, without purse, without scrip, without two coats; because they have not, like Peter and Paul, the immediate supernatural interposition of the Almighty in their favour.’ Indeed, Sir, you have not marked the difference of the circumstances—God would have the first establishment of Christianity to be indisputably his own work; and therefore he sent the fishermen of Galilee to preach it, without learning, without eloquence, without power, without riches; but he gave them what was better than all, an ability to perform miracles, and

his extraordinary providence constantly attended upon them in every difficulty and danger. When men asserted that they were commissioned by God, and in proof of it did such things as could be done only by the power of God; giving sight to the blind, for instance, and speech to the dumb, and other similar things, by a mere word or touch; they wanted no human advantages to rouse and fix the attention of mankind, who were roused sufficiently by their astonishment, and by their hopes and fears, to listen to the men of God. But now, if a man of outward poverty and wretchedness, in a tattered dress, and with an uncouth dialect, were to come into a large assembly, and without any of those wonderful credentials, were to pretend that God sent him to speak to them; what would be the consequence?" "Why," said Mr. Sambrook, laughing, "they would pelt him with mud, and with addled eggs too, if they could get them; and richly would he deserve it." "I should be sorry for that, however," I replied; "but at all events he would be taken for a fool or a madman by the generality, although possibly some few equally foolish or mad with himself, might enlist themselves under his banners. But this system, you plainly see, will not do. We must have men with all the human qualifications mentioned before; and these cannot be had without a certain degree of wealth, both as the means and the end; so that if our ancestors were determined to have a body of Clergy adequate to their business, they could not have done better than endow them as they did. As to tithes indeed, they took the notion from God himself, who thus endowed the Priests and Levites under the Mosaic Law."

"Oh! stop, Sir," he exclaimed; "this is all Greek to me. I know nothing about it." "Very likely;" I replied; "but I must say a few a few words more, and then I have done. The rain is now over, and we shall both be wanted abroad. In giving tithes then our ancestors, I repeat it, were eminently wise, as it is a revenue which keeps pace with the improvement of ages. If they had established a money-payment, or a rent-charge upon their estates, it would now perhaps been worth little or nothing. Of one thing they were not sufficiently aware, the increase of the population; which has been so rapid and so vast as to multiply the labours of the Clergy to an excessive degree, whilst their tithes are the same as in the earliest times, or have only improved with the general improvement of the country. Do you know how many houses have been built in this Parish in your own memory?" "No, I do not," he answered; "but certainly some hundreds." "And of what description?" I inquired. "Chiefly for the poor," he said. "And how many families dwell in each house?" I inquired again. "Seldom less than two," he replied. "Now consider then," I said, "that these houses are all built upon land which formerly paid tithes; that the occupants are all too poor to pay Easter-offerings; that their sick are

to be visited, and their children baptized; and that they are all in their turns assailing me for something or other in their several troubles; consider this, and you will be able to understand whether the Clergy of this day are not in a much worse situation than their predecessors of former times; and not near so rich as their original benefactors intended and wished them to be. I hope therefore, Mr. Sambrook, now that you are better acquainted with the subject, you will no longer join in the senseless cry against us; that you and I shall be good friends in future; that you will fulfil your present bargain punctually and honourably; and that by coming to Church you will give me opportunities of conferring upon you the greatest good which one man can confer upon another; *that* of saving your soul."

Here I concluded, and he said nothing more in reply, than that he was desirous of being on friendly terms with me, and that he would do his utmost to discharge his debt; as to the rest, he shook his head, and gave me no encouragement. Thus we separated for this time. The payments that were to be made, would, I supposed, bring us together again often; and I trusted that something more for his benefit might hereafter be done.

The appointed day for the first payment having arrived, and passed without notice; I could not help suspecting that Mr. Sambrook had still some intentions of deceiving me, and of escaping from his own contract. However he might have been enlightened on the subject of tithes by our last conversation, and his particular prejudices against them lessened; yet to pay away money on any account, where it was due, was contrary to his nature and habits. The taxes and rates were seldom obtained except after the first process of the law, a summons by a magistrate, or a lawyer's letter; so that it would have been ridiculous for the Parson to expect better treatment. An opening however having now been made for an attempt to bring him gradually to Christian principles; I determined to proceed by the gentlest methods, and, if possible, to give no cause for fresh irritation. I walked therefore in the direction of his house, and found him in one of his fields, near home, looking at a most beautiful apple tree, which was in full bloom, and covered with blossoms of various shades of colour.

After the usual salutations, fortunately, he began himself with apologising for his want of punctuality to his engagements, and having stated some reason or other for it, not very satisfactory, I accepted it nevertheless at once; and he then paid me the sum that was first due; being, as he affirmed, about to bring it to me. At the same time he expressed a hope, which was wonderful for such a person, that others paid me better than he did. "They do, certainly," I replied; "but now that we are better acquainted, you will perhaps not yield to any of them. But what must we do for a receipt?"—"Oh! never mind;" he said, "your word is as good

as a stamp.”—“I hope it is,” I answered; “but my memory may fail me.”—“I will trust to that too,” he replied. This amused me exceedingly; but I found universally, that all, who persisted in calling me rogue and robber behind my back, never hesitated for a moment to put the most entire confidence in me, when we had any money transactions together.

“Very well,” I said; “I only wish that you would trust me in things of much greater importance. Mr. Sambrook, you are getting into years; infirmities will come, and sickness, and death. But it would be wise to reflect seriously upon your condition, before you are forced to do so, and when to do it will be more painful, and less easy. Indeed, when I look at your frame and figure, I cannot help fearing, that you may be carried out of this world by one of those sudden, instantaneous, unexpected attacks, which are now so common amongst us; and that it may not please Providence to give you any warnings by a gradual diminution of your health and vigour. You appear to me, Sir, as far as I have the power of judging, and I speak it with unfeigned sorrow, you appear to be living without the worship and even the knowledge of a God; and is not this, besides the danger of it, to degrade yourself to a level with the animals below you, brute and irrational, who feed, and sleep, and perform all their other offices, without being conscious of a Creator and Preserver?”

I watched him closely whilst I was speaking, but I could not ascertain the current of his thoughts. On the whole, I conjectured that shame alone prevented him from avowing himself at once an Atheist. When I paused, he said, “That he considered a sudden death as much preferable to a lingering one, and hoped that his own might be sudden.”—“What?” I asked, “whether prepared or unprepared?”—“I am so far prepared,” was his answer, “as to be certain that I must die; and I do not find things go on so smoothly and pleasantly here, as to make me very desirous of a long life.”—“But what do you think of the next life?” I asked again: “things may go on less smoothly and pleasantly there, unless we have made a due preparation here by virtue and piety. You have a soul, which will never die; and which is now in a state of trial; God, who is a God of justice, will judge it hereafter, when the trial is finished; and if he find it defiled with drunkenness, and sensuality, or any other vice, he will assign to it a terrible lot in eternity. Do you believe all this?”

“No, Sir,” he replied: “these things are too deep for me. I was brought up from my youth to a life of labour. I am no scholar; but I have talked with people who are; and they say that they believe none of these things. And it seems reasonable that no man should be forced to believe what he cannot understand. How do I know that there is any God? I cannot understand what sort of

Being he can be, nor where he can live, nor how he can know what I am doing or thinking now. I say the same about souls, and another world after this, and a last judgment, and everlasting punishments: I cannot understand it; and I stick to this, that I cannot believe, and therefore cannot act upon any thing which I do not understand." In saying all this, he spoke with a tone of vehemence and positiveness, which plainly implied that he thought his position impregnable.

"What tree is this," I inquired, "which looks so uncommonly beautiful?"—"Why, an apple tree, to be sure," he answered. "And does it generally bear fruit?" I inquired again. "Yes," said he, "abundance; and of the very best sorts too; for you see the different flowers, and may guess therefore that it bears different sorts." I went on; "And what do you do with the apples, when they are ripe? You give them to the pigs, I suppose, or throw them upon the dunghill."—"Are you mad, Sir!" he interrupted me eagerly. "They are fit for the king's table; they fetch the very highest price in the market; and I prize them exceedingly."—"How delighted I am," said I, "to have met you near this remarkable tree! For I have always been extremely desirous of understanding something about the production of flowers and fruits; and as you are the wise man who never believe or act upon any thing which you do not perfectly comprehend, I hope you will not be so unkind as to refuse to impart your knowledge to me."

He was not exactly aware of the drift of my reasoning; but he suspected by my manner that I wished to banter him a little; so he answered cautiously, that he would gladly tell me whatever he knew. "Oh, do not deceive me," I said, "or cut short my expectations! of course you know every thing about it; or you would not have done as you have, first planting this tree itself; then grafting upon it the various sorts; pruning every year the superfluous branches; plucking off the superabundant fruit, for the improvement of the rest; and, in short, pursuing all the rules of good husbandry, which are generally crowned with success." He doubted where this would end, and was silent; so I proceeded. "There can be no doubt I suppose, that earth, and water, and air, and heat, and light, work all the wonders that we ever see in this apple tree. Do you know any other element that is in any way concerned in the growth of vegetables?" He thought there could not be any other. "Well then," I said, "and how do these elements make the tree grow?"—"The sap rises in the spring," he answered, "and spreads through the whole."—"But what is the sap?" I asked. "Is it any thing else but the mixture of those several elements?" He allowed that it could not be any thing else. "Certainly," I said, "it cannot. Now therefore tell me how this sap makes wood, and bark, and leaves, and flowers, and fruit. Had this tree any leaves,

or flowers, a month ago?"—"It had not," he said. What a nimble and astonishing, and skilful workman, then," I said, "must this sap be, to do so much, and to produce such beautiful things in so short a space! and so unlike the sap itself too! What pencil painted these flowers with such lively varying delicate tints, and yet had only the gross materials of earth and water to do it with; assisted indeed by the lighter ones of air, and heat, and light? And observe; the sap rises, no doubt, without variation in itself, to that point in the stem from whence the different branches set out; what is it which changes the proportions of its component parts afterwards? For almost every branch, you see, bears a different flower from any other, and therefore the sap must run through it in a different proportion, or with a different power. Explain this to me, and I will thank you heartily."

"Oh! Sir," he answered, "it is Nature that does it all—Nature is wonderful indeed!"—"But who, or what is Nature?" I asked. "Is Nature any living being, or what else?"—"Not a living being, certainly," he said; "but what else I cannot tell."—"If Nature, then," I asked again, "be without life and understanding, what can she do by herself? In point of fact, when we talk of Nature, do we not always mean the rule, or law, or manner, in and by which all things produce their ends and objects? As in the case of the sap; the sap rises by a certain rule, and varies the proportions of its component parts by a certain rule, and disposes itself over the branches of the tree by a certain rule; and then we say this is the effect of Nature."—"That is it, I dare say," was his answer; and he seemed glad to escape from the difficulty. But I immediately rejoined, "if this be so, then we must have somebody who made the rule; somebody who laid down the law; somebody who ordained the manner, according to which all matter acts. Rules and laws do not make themselves; do they?" Here he began to be alarmed, lest he should be forced to acknowledge the necessity of a God; so he said, "May not all these things take place by chance?"—"That seems impossible," I replied. "It is at least incredible. Did you ever see these branches bearing different fruits at different times?"—"No," he said. "But always the same?" I asked. "Yes," he answered; "always the same."—"Then chance," I continued, "is entirely out of the question. Things which never vary must proceed by some steady, constant rule; must they not?" He could not deny it. "Who is it then," I asked, "that made this rule, which could not make itself?" He was pressed very hard, but could not bring himself to confess that there must be a God. At last, after having tried various ways, as it seemed, in his own mind, to avoid this necessity, he exclaimed, with a sort of joy, "I have it! It must be, that things have gone on in the same manner always without any beginning at all. This accounts for every thing

at once in the shortest and simplest way.”—“It appears to me, on the contrary,” I said, “that this supposition of yours accounts for nothing, and increases all the difficulties. Suppose a vast chain hanging from the sky, and reaching within a few yards of the earth; and I should ask you, what supports the bottom link, and you should tell me that it was supported by the link above it, and that those two links were supported by the third link, and so on; and then I should ask what supports the whole chain? Should you think it a sufficient answer to say that the chain had no first link, and was endless? Must not an endless chain be a very long one and consequently be a very heavy one, and require a much greater power to support it? If a chain of ten links requires a certain force to hold it, must not a chain of an infinite length require an infinite force? Because the chain is of an infinite length, you will not surely say that it requires no force whatever to support it.”

I twisted this into different forms, as he was obstinately silent, and manifestly confounded, though resolute not to yield; and then I added, that it was the same with every chain of causes and effects. “Be the chain as long as it may, it requires some first and mighty cause to set the whole in motion. It is the same also with the rule; however long it may have been in action, there must have been a maker of it; and the wiser the rule, the wiser the maker. Indeed in the case of a rule, the matter is strikingly evident. If this apple tree had understanding and speech, it would tell us, no doubt, that its prime end and object was to bear fruit, would it not?”—“It would certainly,” he said. “And are there not,” I asked, “many contrivances about the tree with a view to this particular purpose of bearing fruit?” He allowed it. I gathered a blossom, and continued, “Look at this blossom; do you see these fine threads, which are called the chives?”—“I do,” he answered. “They are the male parts of the flower,” I said; “and the fruit could not be produced without them. See again these still finer threads, in the very centre; they are called the females, and are absolutely essential. In the little heads of the chives, you observe, there is a thin powdery dust; some of it falls, when ripe, upon the summits of these female threads, and it is detained there by a glutinous liquid; afterwards it passes down each thread, which is a tube, and having arrived at the bottom, the embryo fruit is formed, and begins to swell, and at last reaches the size of the apple, which you commend so much. Is not all this wonderful? Are there not plain marks about it of contrivance and design?” He confessed that it seemed so.

“And who ever heard,” I asked, “of contrivance and design, without a contriver and designer?” He was compelled to grant that it was inconceivable. “Is not a watch,” I said, “a very beautiful and skilful contrivance for showing the hour and minute of day and night?” “It is indeed,” he answered. “And when you see

it," I continued, "do you not immediately infer a watchmaker?"—"I do," he replied. I asked again, "You would think it absurd, would you not, to suppose that this exact order, directed to such an object, sprung from chance?" He granted it. "And if any person should tell you that this watch, after all, was not really made by a watchmaker, but by another watch adapted to the purpose, and furnished with a most complicated machinery; what would you think of it?" "Why, I should think," said he, "that the maker of the other watch was ten thousand times more clever than I thought the maker of the simple watch."—"You would be perfectly in the right," I said. "And the last thing, that would ever come into your thoughts, would be, that a watch which was so artfully framed as to make another, had no contriver and maker of itself?" He allowed it would; and then I inquired, if he thought we could get rid of the necessity of a contriver, designer, and maker, by supposing an endless series of watches, each making the next to it in the series. "I might have thought so before," he replied; "but after what has been said, I cannot think so any longer."—"Nothing can be clearer, and more indisputable," said I. "Wherever there is an undoubted contrivance, there is an undoubted contriver also, be he at whatever distance he may from the productions of the present moment. Now, I ask, then, whether man be not one of the most astonishing contrivances of all? And, if so, whether you think it reasonable that a watch should have a contriver, and man not?"

He was speechless, and trembled a little; fearing, as it should seem, that there must be a God, who at first created him, and might hereafter judge him. Seeing him thus affected, I concluded the conversation; hoping that I had planted a sting in his bosom, which would give him continual pain, until he had searched the wound to the bottom; and I added only, in a tone of moderation, and without the least appearance of a triumph, "Act in religion, Mr. Sambrook, as you do in other things. How many things are there, of which you know nothing; and yet you believe and act, as if your knowledge was perfect? Why not the same in religion, which is of infinitely more importance than any thing else? And now that you have discovered a God, the wise contriver and maker of all things, I leave you to consider, whether he ought to be served and worshipped, or not. Good morning! I wish you well with all my heart." He bowed, and we parted.

I did not see Mr. Sambrook again so soon as I expected. He made two more payments, but not in person; the money having been sent by a child, without any demand for a receipt or memorandum. At length, before the next payment became due, he visited me himself, in no slight tribulation. My lawyer had delivered a bill of the expenses, and had fixed a day for the discharge

of it; this was not attended to, and the consequence was that a letter had arrived, thundering out all the vengeance of the law. I promised at once to arrange this matter for him; and accordingly I wrote immediately, in his presence, to desire, at my own risk, that the payment of the costs might be deferred till after the payment of the instalments.

This then having been settled to his satisfaction, I expressed my regret that two or three Sundays had passed since our last conversation without my seeing him at Church. "Why, Sir," he said, "to tell you the truth; I think what you said to me was very clever, and I could not contradict it at the time. But I have considered since that the matter is not quite so clear as you tried to make it appear to be. You told me that God contrived and made every thing; and you spoke also of his wisdom. Now a wise person, I should suppose, would never contrive or make any thing useless, or mischievous; and you cannot deny that we are overrun with such things, both of the animal and vegetable kinds—What say you to this, Sir?" "You mean, perhaps," I replied, "such animals as destroy your corn and your fruit; and vegetables, like nettles, and docks, and brambles, and briars, and other weeds, which cost you so much pains to extirpate, and which, if neglected, would exhaust upon their own growth all the riches of the soil." "I do," he said, "and, as you have yourself mentioned nettles, I should be glad if you would show me their use; that I might have a reason for thinking that they had a wise maker."

Mr. Sambrook was disposed to be jocose with me, fancying that I could not attempt so ridiculous a thing as to prove nettles to be useful. However, I inquired, if he would consider any substance to be useful which contributed to the support of men. He allowed that he should; but he was sure that nettles did not so contribute; unless I pretended that nettle-broth was good for an ague. Here he laughed, and seemed highly diverted with the notion of nettles contributing to the support of mankind. I was pleased to see him in a good humour, and calling one of my children, I desired him to bring me the largest nettle that he could find in a few minutes, and to take especial care not to prick himself with it. Mr. Sambrook was still more amused, and joked with the little boy about carrying the nettle, and advised him to put his gloves on. Meanwhile I asked whether men ate millstones. He began to think me crazy; "but," I said, "millstones may be useful, may they not, although they are not eatable?" He recollected that they were employed in grinding corn, and therefore allowed that they were useful. "So that," I went on, "to prove a thing to be useful to men as contributing to their support, it is only necessary to show that it is, in the order of causes, like the millstone, near or remote." He granted it. "Now look at this nettle then," I said, which the child

had just brought into the room; and upon the leaves of which, on a slight examination, I discovered several insects of the same species enjoying, as it appeared, a most delicious meal. "Well," he cried, "I did not know to a certainty before, that any creature loved nettles. But what has this to do with our present talk?" "It is most closely concerned with it," I replied. "These insects are the food of other animals, and those other animals are the food of man." "Yes, Papa!" said the little boy; "I have often seen the birds flying out of the nettles, but I never knew before, that they went there for their food."

Mr. Sambrook was struck on a heap; but his natural shrewdness did not forsake him; and he inquired immediately, whether it would not have been more wise to have provided something for these insects that was less mischievous to us. "Then," said I, "you would wish, I suppose, rather, than not, that snails, and caterpillars, and other noxious creatures, as they are called, fed upon your lettuces, and cabbages, and richest fruits?" "Not that exactly neither," he replied. "Would it not be best," I inquired, "if they fed entirely upon weeds?" He allowed it. "But these weeds must have ground to grow upon; must they not?" I inquired again. "They must certainly," was his answer. "And wherever they grow," I said, "they become hurtful to other more valuable plants; do they not?" "They do," he replied. "Is industry better than idleness?" I asked. "Certainly," he answered. Does not the clearing away of weeds absolutely require industry?" I asked again—"And is not idleness always punished by the growth of weeds, and the consequent impoverishment of the valuable crop?" It is true, undoubtedly," was his answer. "Then after all," I said, "these contemptible and noxious vegetables, as we consider them, may answer the purposes of a wise Being, who has a vast variety of creatures to provide for, and who may wish to make the virtue of industry necessary to man. In fact the whole truth of the matter is to be found only in this precious book, which lies here upon my table, and out of which I will now read to you the account of it."

"Dear me! Sir," he exclaimed; "I never thought that I was come here to have the Bible read to me!" "What can the Parson do better," I said, "than to read God's book to his flock: and what can *you* do better than study it? In our last conversation you told me that it was impossible for you to ascertain any thing about the nature of God; now I tell you that you may ascertain every thing necessary to be known about him by the study of this holy book. Listen therefore, at least whilst I read the explanation of this one fact." I then took the Bible into my hands, and selected a few verses from the three first chapters of Genesis; particularly dwelling upon the circumstance, that when God rested from the great

work of creation, he saw every thing which he had made, and behold it was very good; but that after the transgression of Adam and Eve, the ground was cursed for their sakes, and commanded to produce thorns and thistles; that they and all their descendants might eat bread in the sweat of their brows, until they returned unto the dust, from which they were taken. Having commented upon this great transaction in such a manner as to make him catch at least some glimpses of it, (for he was entirely uninformed about it before) I proceeded thus—"See now, Mr. Sambrook the wonderful goodness of God, who even in judgment always remembers mercy. He diminished indeed the original happiness of man; but what a happy world is this after all! Many people have not sense enough to see it, because it is indulged commonly to all of us, and too many who see it have not gratitude enough to acknowledge it. Food and drink, generally speaking, cannot be procured without labour; can they?" "Certainly not," he answered. "And people must eat and drink to live; must they not?" I asked. "They must," he said. "So that if it had been a painful thing to eat and drink, yet men would have gladly submitted to it; would they not?" I asked again. He agreed with me that they undoubtedly would. "What do you think of it then yourself?" I inquired. "Do you reckon it a painful thing to eat and drink, which you would not undergo, but for the sake of preserving life?" He candidly confessed that eating and drinking, on the very contrary, were amongst the most pleasant and delightful of all acts, and that probably millions of men were scarcely conscious of any other pleasure. "But God," I said, "who made eating and drinking necessary, might have superadded to it either pain or pleasure, just as it suited his own temper; his having made it pleasant and delightful therefore was a signal mark of pure, abundant, and disinterested goodness."

Mr. Sambrook seemed to be let into a new world. He made no scruple whatever to tell me that he never recollected once to have thought of such things; and I might perhaps have pursued the conversation in the same strain to his advantage; but I was aware that he could not conveniently be spared from his business, and therefore I dismissed him with these words—"This, Sir, is but one proof, out of an infinite number of proofs, of God's goodness. The whole day would be gone before we could speak of a millionth part of them. His mercies are over all his works. Think of this, and you will begin to love him, and to desire to please him and serve him, and to be more satisfied with yourself. And, however you may be conscious to yourself that you fall below the perfection of his law, yet do not fear. He, in the exercise of the same goodness, has provided a remedy for this, with which you may become acquainted, by reading the New Testament, and by frequenting your

church. In both those acts too you may expect God's especial blessing to light upon you."

I rung the bell, and he departed, without letting me into the present state of his feelings. If the coming to church was to be the test of any serious change, I feared that he would find it a most difficult thing to do so. Shame alone was too likely to deter him. However, I trusted to time, the continuance of our conversations, and the good providence of God.

In the interval between this and our next meeting, an awful event occurred in Mr. Sambrook's family, which was calculated to promote my views, by leading naturally to serious and solemn reflection. A sister, who had come from a distance to visit him, died suddenly in his house. He attended the funeral, which took place in my own church-yard; and I myself performed the ceremony. In this and in the other occasional services I always take the utmost pains to give them their due effect, not only from feeling, but out of policy. Many persons are present at marriages, and christenings, and funerals, who never have come to church on any other occasion; and they are the only opportunities which the Minister has of making any impression upon them whatever; opportunities, which he would be unwise to neglect. If he can but touch their hearts by the solemn devoutness of his tone and manner in these services, they may be tempted to come and see what he is in his greater function of preaching. I know indeed that this has frequently happened; and I know also on the other hand that much scandal has arisen where this salutary, and but decent, practice has not been attended to. People have gone away with the full idea that the Minister cared nothing about these duties; which was either a great shock to their feelings, if they were religious persons, or confirmed them in their irreligion, if they were the contrary. In both cases great mischief has been done.

On the present occasion I acted only as I always do; and I found that it was noticed to my advantage and the credit of our religion. The funeral was on a Sunday, and the crowd was the more numerous. In a few days after, I met Mr. Sambrook on a private foot-path, and he immediately mentioned the subject, and told me, that his late sister's husband, now a widower, had derived much comfort from the manner in which I had read the burial service. "I believe, Mr. Sambrook," I said, "that I always read it in the same manner; but perhaps unconsciously on your account I might have given it somewhat of an additional awe and solemnity. Your poor sister died suddenly; I have told you that I thought it probable your own end might be the same. This was in my mind, whilst I stood by the side of the grave, and saw you looking into it; and possibly it might have led me imperceptibly to speak with a

more serious and warning voice—God grant that it may have succeeded!"

He was quite at a loss what to say to this. He was affected in some way or other, which I could not explain; and at all events he seemed to wish to escape from any further conversation. But I was unwilling to lose so promising an opportunity; and therefore I turned about and offered to accompany him in the direction in which he was going. He could not refuse with any degree of civility; so we walked together; and that I might not appear to force the subject of religion upon him, in season or out of season, I waited to take advantage of any thing which he might happen to say.

The funeral was still in his thoughts: and the first observation that he made was, that the description of the resurrection of the dead, which I had read to them in the lesson, was certainly very fine, but that he could not believe a word about the resurrection itself. "Do you think it not possible," I asked, "or not probable?" "Neither the one," he answered, "nor the other." "As to the possibility of the thing," I said, "your difficulty, I presume, arises from your knowing, that the body after death is dissolved into dust, and in many cases scattered abroad in different places; and you cannot conceive how the particles can be brought together again, so as to preserve the identity; or, in plainer words, so as to be known to be the same body." "That is it exactly," said he. I was very much relieved by this answer; for I was alarmed lest I might be led into an interminable discussion about the soul, in regard to which I was sure that he had none but the most vulgar ideas; and probably he had no clear ideas at all about the soul as distinct from the body; and I did not see how we could ever arrive at any thing practical by that line of argument. I therefore proceeded at once to argue upon his own difficulty, and was very careful not to put any new one into his head.

"You have mentioned St. Paul," I said, "already, as a most distinguished preacher of the Gospel. It seems, therefore, that you know something of his character. It was he who wrote the epistle from which the lesson is taken. Do you remember how he explains, or illustrates, the resurrection?" "Yes;" he replied; "by the sowing of seed; but I could not comprehend it; in short, it seemed quite ridiculous." We were walking at this moment through a field of wheat. "If I am not mistaken," I said, "this is one of your fields." He nodded assent. "And perhaps you sowed this wheat yourself?" He assented again. "But it did not occur to you, it seems, that whilst you were sowing, you were in fact burying every single grain in its own little grave." "No, it did not," he said; "but it was certainly something very much like it." "Very like indeed," I proceeded; "and therefore so far St. Paul was in the right. And the grains which you scattered about in the

furrows were dead; were they not?" "Why, to be sure," he answered, "they might be called dead: as all the moisture, which they had in them whilst they were growing, seemed to be entirely dried up, and there was no appearance of life about them; they had become quite hard, and fit to be ground into flour." "Well," I said, "and what became of them, when they were mixed with the soil and buried? Did they not begin to rot, as any human body might do?" He granted it. "Still then St. Paul is correct; but now comes the surprising change. When you might have expected the grains of seed to have rotted entirely away, and to disappear altogether, up sprung from them innumerable small green blades apparently of grass; did there not?" "There did," he answered. "In fact," I said, "if you had examined those seeds, whilst they were rotting in the ground, you would have found something in them most wonderful amongst all the wonderful things which surround us; you would have found in each the rudiment, or principle, or whatever it may be called, of a new plant; something indeed, which had all the parts of a plant in miniature, and which only wanted the heat and moisture arising from the putrefaction of the rest of the seed to make it vegetate and grow; have you observed this, or not?" "I have often observed it," he replied. "So then," I said, "the great Apostle might have thought of some similar principle in the decaying body of a man, which hereafter might shoot into life, and produce the new man." "Yes," said he, "but we see nothing of this sort in the human body." "Nor do we," I rejoined, "in the dry grain; it appears afterwards according to the law, which God himself has established. For, you may remember, in talking of the apple-tree, we were forced to impute every thing to the will and the wisdom of God; and so we must in this case. Pray what lodged that little embryo-plant in the body of the seed? What made it sprout upwards and downwards, upwards into the green blade and downwards into the root? Who put the embryo-plant into the right position to do this? And did not a stem afterwards issue out of the blade, and then an ear from the top of the stem, and lastly was not the ear filled with grains? Who planned all this, and ordained the means by which the plan was executed? You and I know nothing at all about it; no, nor the wisest philosopher. In many cases, in which we are ignorant, a person more skilled in the knowledge of nature than we are, may be perfectly informed; so that it would be vastly foolish for us to say that such or such a thing cannot be believed, or cannot be, merely because we do not understand the how or the why of the thing; for others may understand it very well, and we ourselves may come to understand it hereafter. In this case, however, of the growth of the corn, we are all ignorant, both wise and simple: and we shall probably remain so. But what of that? The thing is as it is, and goes on nevertheless—Why? because God is

the author of it, and keeps the necessary causes in uninterrupted operation.—Have you any thing to object to this?"

"I have not," he answered, "I see clearly that there must be a God, and I begin to admire his works." "Go on and prosper." I said; "the more you know of them, the more you will admire them; and the more, I hope, you will love and serve the Doer! But now tell me, is there any thing more wonderful, or more hard for God to do, in the resurrection of a dead body from the grave, than in the production of the wheat from the seed?" "There is a great difference," he replied, "in the two things after all." "There may be a hundred differences," I rejoined; "but what of that? Does it follow, that of two things one is possible, and the other impossible, because this other is not like the former in all respects, when God too is the worker?" He could not say that. "Well then," I went on; "here is a thing, namely, the resurrection of the dead, of which we have yet no experience. St. Paul, indignant that any man should doubt it, when God had said that he would do it, tells the doubters that they might form some idea of it from the sowing of seed and the growing of the grain, which is equally inexplicable, but of which the fact is well known to us. Shall we quarrel with the Apostle, because the two things cannot be exactly alike in all circumstances? But what are the circumstances that are unlike?" "The new plant," he answered, "springs up from the seed after a short period, before the whole seed itself is turned into vegetable mould." "Very well," I said; "but it did not suit the purposes of Providence, that there should be a resurrection of the dead soon after the burial of each corpse, but one simultaneous resurrection of all at the last day; on account of the general judgment of mankind then to take place, and thereafter the everlasting separation of the good and the bad into Heaven and Hell." He seemed to shudder at this thought; but he made no remark. I therefore proceeded—"To bring about a general resurrection at the same moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the mighty sound of a trumpet piercing to the remotest corners of the universe; undoubtedly there must be causes at work with which we are unacquainted, or God himself may do it immediately by an especial act of power, when the appointed time is come. Either way there ought to be no difficulty to us, unless we think that God is neither all-wise, nor almighty. He, whose contrivances are so subtle and so complicated in thousands of natural things may readily be supposed capable of this; and he, whose power was great enough to make man at the first, and is great enough to unmake him every day in the midst of health and strength, may readily be supposed capable of making him again after death—Is not this so?"

"These are wonderful things," he answered, "but I cannot contradict them. I wish, however, to know what will become of

bodies which are scattered about in various distant places, and parts of which perhaps have passed into other substances.” “Alas! alas! Mr. Sambrook,” I said, “if you had but looked into your Bible now and then, you would have had more exalted ideas of God’s power; so as not to stumble at such petty difficulties. He that said, let there be light; and there was light; cannot he order all the particles of a man’s body, scattered wherever they may; east, west, north, and south; on the tops of the highest mountains, and at the bottoms of the deepest oceans; to return in an instant of time to the rest of the mass, and to rebuild the former man? Certainly he can; he has only to will, and the thing is done. He cannot but know where every particle is, and no particle can be beyond the reach of his power. But perhaps nothing of this kind will be necessary; all indeed that is necessary is this; that after the resurrection we should be certain we are the same persons as before; and that is possible with a very great change of our bodies, as is proved in our passage from childhood to old age; every particle is changed again and again, and yet we are always conscious of our own identity. Let us have done then with cavils, Mr. Sambrook. It is God who has promised it, and he will not fail. This settles the question of probability at once. We should have known nothing about it, but for God’s revelation. We might have hoped a little about the soul, that it would survive the shock of death; but the resurrection of the body we should never have dreamed of. He has revealed it to us, and therefore it is not only possible and probable, but absolutely certain. God cannot lie. But we must always remember that there will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust; and may he grant, for our Saviour Jesus Christ’s sake, that you and I may be amongst the just!”

I had walked as far as was convenient to me, when I spoke these last words, and it did not seem likely, if I continued the conversation, that I could have concluded with any thing more forcible. I turned, therefore, suddenly, and took my leave.

About two days after this conversation, as I was walking through my parish to visit the sick, Mr. Grange, whom I met frequently on the road, accosted me unusually, and inquired, if I had heard the news—“What news?” I said, “I have heard none.” “About Mr. Sambrook, Sir. He is dead!” replied Mr. Grange. “Mr. Sambrook dead!” I exclaimed, with a mixture of surprise and terror. “God forbid, Sir! I should fear he was scarcely prepared to die; but God knows best when it is fit, in the exercise of his government of the world, to inflict the blow of death!” “Be that as it may, Sir,” said he, “Mr. Sambrook is certainly dead. And now I see that it will give you still greater pain to hear the manner of his death. He used to be your enemy, Sir; and there are too many

who would be glad of the misfortunes of an enemy; which you, I perceive, are not." I was, indeed, very much shocked, and betrayed my inward feelings by my outward manner. At the same time I was eager to know more; I desired, and yet feared to be told the rest. A thousand ideas darted through my head, like lightning; but that something tragical was to be told I had no doubt whatever. "He was thrown, Sir," said Mr. Grange, "last night from his chaise-cart, and killed upon the spot." "What?" I said, "Without any preparation? Not a moment spared to ask God to pardon him?" "I am told Sir," he replied, "that the unfortunate man scarcely breathed, when he was found, which was immediately after the accident." "Let us all take warning, Mr. Grange," I said, and passed on hastily; for I was deeply affected, and wanted a short time for silent meditation on the judgments of the Almighty disposer of all events.

In the course of my walk, I was informed by various persons of all the particulars of Mr. Sambrook's death. It seems that he had been drinking at a pothouse; and, either from natural good-humour, or stimulated by liquor, had undertaken to convey some people, whom he met there, in his chaise-cart, to the neighbouring parish. Having done this, and having probably drank something more there, and again on his return at another pothouse, he was so far heated as to contend for the lead on a narrow road with a cart of the same description as his own. The wheels of the two carts came in contact with each other; he was thrown forward with violence in consequence of the sudden stop; he fell upon his head; his neck was dislocated; and his death was instantaneous.

My anxiety about him led me to inquire what had been his habits since I began first to converse with him. I think I ascertained that he had been much less frequently at the public-houses; but nobody assigned any other cause of this apparent amendment than the increasing want of money. Whether he was amended in any other respects after his mind had been in some measure enlightened, I cannot tell. On the fatal day of his death he was evidently intoxicated; or a man of his age would never have engaged in so childish and dangerous a contest. As to Church, he had never been there, except at his sister's funeral; although I had expected it of him, as the proof of his intention to begin a new life.

His death, owing to the awful circumstances of it, and the idea which had got abroad that he had despised my warning voice, made a great noise in the parish. At the funeral there was an immense concourse of people. The distress of the widow and daughters seemed to be beyond all measure. The daughters fainted again and again; the widow was supported by two of her sons, and made several attempts to throw herself into the grave. The church-yard resounded with their screams. This at first astonished me. If

these persons had been brought up in religious habits, or were likely to be touched with religious feelings, the scene before them was undoubtedly most affecting and most terrible. A husband, a father, having persisted to the last in a vicious course, and in the utter neglect of his Maker and Redeemer, in spite of the instructions and admonitions of the parish-priest, was now hurled on the sudden by avenging justice, as it might reasonably be feared, into a bitter eternity. But the case with these persons was apparently the reverse, and must be explained in a different manner. And a circumstance, which came soon afterwards to my knowledge, did, I think, sufficiently explain it. Much noise and tumult was heard within the poor man's premises during the whole evening of the funeral; such as is the consequence of intoxication; and it is more than probable that those who attended the funeral were excited by the force of liquor to that exhibition of excessive grief, with which the sober-minded were shocked and disgusted.

I had an opportunity of discovering afterwards that the sons and daughters had a very inadequate feeling of their father's calamity. They came to me three or four times about the settlement of his debt, which, at length, after another abatement on my part, was finally discharged. At first I feared to wound them to the quick by mentioning his dreadful end; but I soon found that there was no occasion for any delicacy. They were manifestly very little moved by it. However, one or two of them came to Church at intervals in consequence of what I then said to them. The widow, whom I have not been able to see, came once only.

Upon the whole, in closing this history, I cannot but express my hope that others may be more successful in similar cases. One lesson to be learnt is, that we must not relax our efforts on the vain notion that we shall have plenty of time because our patient is strong and healthy. Death interposes, and destroys the calculations and the patient together.

CHAPTER III.

MR. MADDOX—DESPAIR.

ONE Sunday evening in the summer, as I was strolling in my garden after tea, I was suddenly called to speak to a visiter, who waited for me in the house. It was Mr. Wilkins, a farmer, one of my parishioners.

Having accosted him in the usual manner, he apologized for intruding upon me at such an hour; and then added, that “a very awkward business had happened,” (such was his own expression) which had occasioned his visit. I was lost in conjecture, what this business might be, which he termed “an awkward one,” and in which I concluded, of course, that I was personally concerned; and I begged that he would explain himself. He soon relieved me from all suspense on the subject, by informing me, that Mr. Maddox, a neighbour and friend of his, also a farmer, was at the point of death, and “would not be satisfied without seeing me.” Such again was his own expression; and he said moreover, “that he had attempted to dissuade Mr. Maddox from troubling me, but in vain.”

The fact was, that Mr. Wilkins himself was never in his place at Church, and that he had very little, if any, feeling of religion at all; a Christian he could not be reckoned in any sense. The desire, therefore, which Mr. Maddox expressed to see me, appeared no doubt, to Mr. Wilkins, to be a superstitious weakness, or at the best an idle and useless notion. However, he could not deny the request of a dying man; but he stated that request to me, in his own manner, and according to his own ideas.

In reply, I began with regretting, that he had attempted to dissuade Mr. Maddox from sending for me in such an awful extremity, when I might possibly convey some comfort to him; and I then assured him that, however painful or troublesome the office might be of attending upon the sick and dying, I considered it one of my most essential duties, and should be always ready to perform it, even at an unseasonable hour, and after a fatiguing day; and who knows but that, even in the case of Mr. Maddox, whose life, I said, had been a constant violation of the divine laws, and certainly passed in an apparent disbelief and contempt of the Christian Revelation, still, as he might now entertain different sentiments, and

repent of his past conduct, which was indicated at least by his wish to see me, who knows but that, by God's mercy, something may yet be done for the salvation of his soul.

Mr. Wilkins made no direct answer to these observations, but seemed wrapped in thought; and as I did not think this a proper opportunity to detain him in conversation, and also expected to meet him again presently, I dismissed him with the promise of following him immediately. Upon my arrival at Mr. Maddox's house, Mr. Wilkins was there; but I saw him only for an instant, and, alas! he had no intention of joining in the awful matters that were about to take place in the sick man's chamber.

Whilst my name was announced, and preparations were made for my reception, I was left alone in the best parlour, which I had abundant opportunity to survey, and which gave evident tokens that it had once been the scene of festivity and joy. All the apparatus of drinking and jollity was to be seen in goodly order; of which a punch-bowl, of large dimensions, was a prominent feature; and several wine glasses had each a lemon suspended in them, as if for immediate use. Meanwhile I learned from the nurse, who came into the room, what I had already begun to conjecture, that jovial "riotous living" had reduced Mr. Maddox to the sad condition in which he was now lying—"His inside," she said, "was quite worn out."

At length being introduced into the chamber, I saw the sick man at once in his bed; the curtains being all undrawn to give him air. His eyes instantly met mine, being turned to the door at which I entered. There was something very uncommon about them; they were large, beyond the usual size, and protruded far from the hollow sockets; they were restless, and betrayed the consciousness of guilt, suspicion, and fear. Before I was near enough to speak, I observed besides, and was shocked at, his whole haggard look, which betokened a rooted grief of mind denying all sleep and rest, rather than bodily pain threatening the extinction of life. The sight was appalling and piteous; and it immediately prescribed the line of my duty. The reed was already bruised, and needed not to be further broken.

Being now arrived at the bed, I began—"I was very sorry, Sir, to hear, as I did for the first time half an hour ago, of your sickness; but I hope things are not so bad, but that you may still live to thank God for his goodness towards you." He shook his head, as one who despaired not of life only, but of God's goodness also.

"What does your doctor think of you?" I inquired, with tenderness. He replied, with agony. "The doctor says he can do nothing more."

"But what is impossible with man, is possible with God," I said in a solemn devout tone. And good reason I had to say so, fortified

by my own experience. At least I had seen several cases, in which the patients, abandoned by the medical men to the ministrations of the Parish Priest, had wonderfully recovered under those auspices; and recovered, alas! in some of those cases, only to relapse into their former sins and follies.

"But what is your own opinion of yourself?" I continued to question him, with the same mildness as before.

He answered quick, and sternly, "I am a dead man, and must go to——." His meaning was too evident, by his voice and manner, and I interrupted him, before he could express it, by an involuntary exclamation of "God forbid!" He was softened a little; and I began to lament, not as one in anger, but as a person anxious for his welfare, present and future, temporal and eternal, that he had delayed to send for me to so late a period.

"Ah! Sir," he replied, "they would not suffer me to do it. They ridiculed me; they rated me—What? send for a Parson? Belie your principles, from a paltry fear of dying?"

"To die, however," I said, "merely to die, if death were to terminate every thing, is so contrary to nature, as reasonably to create reluctance and aversion; but as it is at least doubtful whether there may not be an hereafter, to last for ever; and if there be such an hereafter, there must be a state of retribution; your fear, Sir, if you had any fear, was most just and proper; and their freedom from fear, if it was real, was a blind fool-hardiness; and if pretended, was no kindness to *you*."

"Ah, Sir! the approach of death let in new light upon me. It was terrible—I could bear it no longer—I determined to send for you, in spite of arguments or jeers. Would that I had done it sooner! It is now too late—I am sure it is."

"I hope not," I said; "your mind has undergone a change, with which God will be pleased; and may we not trust in his infinite mercy, that, having begun a good work in you, he will carry it on to perfection?"

"No, no!" he cried, with a dreadful energy; "there is no room for such a trust. I have sinned beyond redemption. There is no crime which I have not committed; not one, except murder perhaps." And then he stopped, and seemed to be considering whether he had not also been guilty of murder; and at the same time he cast such a look upon me, as if he expected that after this confession I should shrink from him with horror.

And indeed I was somewhat horror-struck, but prepared to answer in the manner that appeared necessary; when a person, not hitherto mentioned, interposed, and with a confident sort of tone attempted, not exactly to sooth the poor man's fears, but to lessen or extinguish them altogether, by telling him that he was not half so bad as he made himself to be, and that hundreds and thousands were

much worse. This person, as I found afterwards, was no other than a kept woman, and she was probably stung to the quick by what Mr. Maddox had said of his own guilt, and not a little alarmed lest he might enter into details of crimes in which she herself was involved. But I was then ignorant of her situation, and had only formed generally a bad opinion of her, from her dress, and from her whole appearance and manner. At all events her remark, pronounced too in such a tone, was not to be passed over in silence; not that it seemed to make any impression for an instant upon the sick man; but for her own instruction, and to fortify him in his present feelings of self-abasement and unworthiness.

I said therefore, "You are not acting a kind and friendly part towards Mr. Maddox, in talking after that fashion. He appears to have a much juster sense of his own condition, and humbles himself very properly under the hand of the Almighty. He knows very well that it cannot make any difference to him, how many persons there may be in the world worse than himself. He will be judged by his own works, and not by the works of others. And think you that God cannot punish many as easily as a few; or that, like weak men, he will be compelled to select a few of the most guilty to suffer punishment instead of the whole mass? Remember the destruction of Sodom; remember the flood. But you say that Mr. Maddox is not half so bad as he makes himself to be. Alas! alas! we are all bad enough to be guilty in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold with complacency any sort of iniquity. We are all, therefore, bad enough to expect from God's justice everlasting misery; and without doubt this would be the doom of us all, if our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had not done what he has for us."

At the name of the Saviour, the sick man exclaimed, with the look and voice of despair, "That Saviour is no Saviour for *me*!"

"Do you believe in him?" I asked, with eagerness. "I do;" he answered at once. "I believe in God; and I believe in Jesus Christ; and I believe in the Holy Ghost; and I believe in all that I was taught and read in the Bible in my younger days—but I believe like the devils, only to tremble—I am a devil myself."

The manner in which he pronounced all this was quite indescribable. The certainty of perishing for ever haunted his mind without ceasing. The mercy of God through Christ was utterly intercepted from his eye by a thick dark cloud—he saw him only armed with the thunderbolt. Not a tear was shed; not a groan was uttered. His air was that of a man fixed, determined, resolute to die without hope. I was in deep dismay, and about to relinquish the distressing task, as vain; but I said, "if you believe in Jesus Christ, you believe that he is able to save."—"Yes," he answered. "And not to save *you*?" I continued. He was struck, and hesi-

tated. I endeavoured to gain ground, and said, "he is indeed mighty to save; and it would be a most unworthy notion of him, to suppose, that his power was limited to this or that person, to this or that crime."

Resuming his obduracy, however, after so short an interval, the sick man in haste replied, "able to save, but not willing."

"Oh, yes!" I resumed, "he is most willing, as he is most able, to do it. The Scripture tells us so; he tells us so himself—'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.'—'Come unto me, all ye that travail, and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest.'—'Them that come unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' But I will read to you the 15th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel," I said, "that you may see more clearly how much all the blessed inhabitants of heaven rejoice in mercy, and how much they wish to save. Give me the Bible," I said to the woman. She looked surprised, and ashamed; and then she pretended to search for it.

"This is no time for deceit," said the sick man. "We have no Bible here, Sir. Every verse would condemn us. We have cast off the Bible; and now the God of the Bible has cast off *us*."

I took my own Bible from my pocket. "Oh! Sir," he cried, "show me not that book! I have disobeyed it; I have vilified it; I have driven it from my house, with scorn and hatred. The sight of it cuts me to the heart."

"This holy book alone," I said, "shows us the way to eternal life. It does indeed affirm and prove that we are all sinners; but it does so, that abandoning all righteousness of our own, we may seek after the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. Is it possible that those sweet and heavenly sentences, which I repeated to you a few minutes ago out of this book, and which so strikingly describe the whole gracious object of the Gospel, did not pierce to your very soul, and produce there unutterable comfort and peace, to which it has been so long a stranger? But hear the three parables." I then proceeded to read them; and, as I went along, I interspersed such comments, upon various passages, as were most suitable to his case. I dwelt especially upon the joy of the angels over a recovered sinner; and upon that most touching and consolatory representation of the father, beholding his repentant son, whilst he was yet afar off; compassionating his misery at once; and hastening to meet him with all the ardour and all the signs of paternal love. "Let this," I said, "sink deep into your heart; and assure yourself, beyond all doubt, that God always waits to be gracious; that he sees, and hails, and favourably receives the very first symptoms of sorrow and remorse, when the sinner begins to come to himself, and to the knowledge of his real condition; that he sends his Holy Spirit, if we pray for him, to improve these good beginnings; to root out the old affections, and to implant new ones;

and to ripen our sorrow and remorse into a true repentance and amendment of life; and that all this time our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ is interceding for us, giving effect to our prayers, and pleading on our behalf the merits of his own sufferings and death."

Mr. Maddox did not once interrupt me. He was silent, but not listless. It was evident, however, that the storm was not allayed. I had said, "Peace; be still;" but the calm, which I wished, had not yet succeeded to my words. He had not addressed, aloud at least, a single petition to Heaven; he had not ejaculated a single cry for pardon; he had not beat his breast, like the Publican, or said, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Nevertheless I was somewhat elevated with hope, and went on in this manner.

"You perceive now, Sir, that there is no want of willingness to save in those who are also mighty to save; there is, moreover, no exclusion of nations, or of individuals, however wicked; be they who they may, if they will come to God through Christ, they will be saved to the uttermost. What is it then that excludes *you*? Your sins? We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The greatness of your sins? Be they red like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

I stopped, wishing him to speak; and that I might discover whether any, or what sort of impression had now been made upon him. He was still silent; but I considered it as somewhat gained, that he did not attempt to argue with me, or to controvert my doctrine; or to state any reasons which might make that doctrine inapplicable to himself. If he had but asked me to pray with him, or for him, (and I had given him intentionally an opening to do so,) I should have been greatly encouraged. But the idea of praying seemed never to occur to him. It was high time therefore for *me* to propose it. Could he but be brought to pray, I thought, God's blessing might yet descend upon him. I said therefore at once, not meaning to allow him any opportunity of objecting, "I will now kneel down and pray with you. Every thing may be done by prayer, and nothing without it." I knelt immediately on the floor by the bed-side. Some one was bringing me a cushion; but I refused it, saying, that the floor was good enough for the best of us." It is possible that this little circumstance was not without its effect upon the sick man. It gave him perhaps an opinion of my zeal and earnestness in his cause; and also he might have thought, that by thus lowering myself, I showed that I did not imagine myself to be at such a distance from him as he was disposed to put himself in his own estimation. He said, however, "Oh! good Sir, I cannot pray with you. My lips have been long unused to prayer—but you may pray for me, if you please."—"I will," I replied; "and may God prosper my prayer."

I then began the prayers for persons troubled in mind or in con-

science, which is to be found at the end of the service for the Visitation of the Sick; but my own situation was so momentous, and that of the sick man so peculiar and so critical, that I was interrupted every instant by the overpowering force of my own feelings; tears and sobs burst forth, and precluded all utterance; yet I did not cease altogether until I had reached the conclusion; then rising upon my legs, I said, "I will see you again to-morrow—God bless you!"

It was now grown dark, and I was myself too much affected to watch the emotions of my patient; but it was manifest that he was warmed with a sudden glow of gratitude towards me, whatever other effect might have been produced; for he followed me with his eyes, and replied with energy to my benediction, "And may God bless *you!* God *will* bless you."

These sounds were most delightful to my ears; and I hastened home, consoling myself with the thought, that my own distress of mind, which had prevented me from proceeding any further with the sick man at that moment, might have been perhaps, by God's blessing, more efficacious than a thousand arguments.

Having slept but ill, I rose so much the sooner on the following day, and returned with the sun to Mr. Maddox's house. Indeed, not a moment was now to be lost; for though to myself his end seemed yet at a distance, I was confidently assured that it was fast approaching. During the night I had ruminated upon our past conversation, and revolved in my thoughts all the probable arguments that might yet be urged, if the conversation were renewed, and continued in the same strain; and many texts and facts of Scripture had occurred to me, which were suitable to my purpose of soothing and tranquillizing a troubled guilty mind: but my meditations were of little use to me on the present occasion.

I was admitted immediately. The poor man was lying upon his bed, not in it. The night had been a terrible one to him, both to his body and to his mind. His body had been convulsed again and again; his mind perpetually harrowed with the anticipations of eternal wo. Well had he verified the saying of the prophet, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." He had been too, for a short time, delirious; yet he appeared to have much strength remaining. He raised himself up without assistance, and sat upon the end of his bed, supporting himself by his hands and arms; and soon he sunk back again, finding the posture inconvenient and painful. Yet he tried it repeatedly, and returned as often to the horizontal position, without appearing to find rest or relief in either. A dark gloom hung upon his brow; his eyes were still stern, and unsoftened by a single tear: nor did he greet me, as I fondly fancied he would, with even the faintest smile of satisfaction at my arrival.

What was now to be done? I expressed, with tenderness, my fears that he had passed a bad night; to which he answered simply, "bad indeed." I then said, "that we were all of us in the hands of God, and that we must submit with patience, and resign ourselves calmly to his will." He did not speak, but looked, as if he yielded to a force which was irresistible, and not to a wisdom and goodness, which were infinite. I next endeavoured to draw his mind this way, by saying, that "amidst all God's severity his goodness was still evident in permitting him to have the use of his mental faculties; so that even now, in this great extremity, he might pray to God with understanding, and pass the present moments at least in trying to be reconciled to him, and to obtain pardon and peace, before he went hence, and was no more seen. And what way," I said, "so proper for this end, as prayer? Last night we concluded with prayer; this morning we will begin with it."

He was quite passive. I kneeled down therefore, and continued, "I will choose for you a prayer of King David. He was a man, you know, after God's own heart, in the times of his low fortune, and his adversity. It pleased God to try him with prosperity, riches and power. He raised him to a throne, and crowned him with victories and conquests. But David was unable to digest this exalted greatness. He was corrupted by fame, and pomp, and luxury, and power; and his passions and appetites got the better of his reason and his religion. He seduced the beautiful and beloved wife of his neighbour; and that he might conceal and enjoy his crime, he put into practice the basest frauds and artifices, which ended in his neighbour's death. To speak plainly, therefore, he was guilty of adultery and murder; two sins, the foulest, the blackest, the most enormous, which God has forbidden in the ten commandments. He committed those sins too, at a period of his life, when he could not plead in his excuse the force of youthful passion; for he was now in a manner grown old and grey in the service of his God."

Mr. Maddox appeared to be deeply attentive to this story of David, which was probably in some respects not unlike his own; and for a while his pain, both bodily and mental, was forgotten; but he made no observation. I went on therefore, and said, "Let us now see what were the feelings of this great sinner, when he became at last conscious of the horrors of his situation, and spurned himself with indignation and shame for having so eagerly and so wickedly pursued the transient gratification of his sensual, brutal appetites. Let us see what he thought of himself, and how he prayed to God for pardon—and, remember, he *was* pardoned."

I then repeated the 51st Psalm, looking up now and then to see if it produced a favourable effect, and if the dying man joined in it. I could not perceive that he did; at least his lips never moved. To induce him therefore to speak something indicatory of the present

state of his mind, I commented briefly upon the Psalm, and said, "Thus did David pray, and thus did he humble himself before God; and because he was sincere, God forgave him. And why may not God be equally merciful to *you*, for Jesus Christ's sake?"

Collecting all his strength, he replied to my question; "David was sincere, you tell me; and he lived to show it. How can I answer for myself at such a moment? What time will be spared me to give any proof of my sincerity by a new life? I shall be a dead man perhaps in a few hours."

"But God knows," I said, "the very inmost thoughts of your heart. He knows also whether any good resolutions, which you might now form, assisted by his Holy Spirit, would be afterwards fulfilled. He knows whether you would persevere in well-doing, if he were to spare your life and prolong it; and knowing all this, he will accept a proper will for the deed itself. Did not Jesus Christ pardon the very penitent thief on the cross? The thief was stained, we may suppose, with every crime; but in the midst of torture and death, he believed and trusted in a dying Saviour; and he bore witness to his sincerity by every act then in his power. His blessed Saviour, therefore, satisfied no doubt of his entire change of heart, acknowledged him at once for his own, and cheered him with that great unexpected promise of receiving him into Paradise. This is recorded for our comfort and instruction; not that we should spend our lives in sin, with the intention of repenting at last, and with the hope of obtaining the thief's reward at so cheap a cost; (for God will assuredly avenge himself on all who reason in this manner, and will defeat their monstrous purposes;) but it is recorded, that no man may despair under any circumstances; and that we may know, that whilst a breath of life remains, there is a possibility of pardon and salvation."

"Ah! Sir," he exclaimed, "if my life were to be spared; (which cannot be) might not the same thoughts and the same desires return, as my strength returned? Would not the same companions get about me, as before; and ridicule my past fears, and my present temperance; and laugh me again into my former vices? Oh! I have too long been unused to all goodness; every act of it would be strange and uneasy to me. And will God pardon and reward such a temper as mine? I cannot hope it—I am lost for ever."

Before I could reply, the exertions of the poor man to say all this, and his anguish of mind, had completely exhausted him; and a convulsion followed. I did not stay to witness this terrific scene, for which indeed I wanted strength of nerve. I speeded homewards; intending to return after breakfast—but alas! as I heard soon afterwards, in that convulsion he breathed his last.

Such was the divine will! Whether he were in a state of salvation, or not, when he died, God did not vouchsafe so far to bless

my defective ministrations as that he should die in peace; an awful reflection for the minister and for the people! Who is sufficient for a due discharge of his spiritual duties in such trying difficult scenes? What sinner will tempt God to shut up from him his tender mercies to the very end?

It is awful, too, most awful to reflect upon the sad history of some of the wretched man's companions, who survived him, and who reproached him in his misery for desiring the assistance of a Clergyman. Mr. Stanton, touched for a short period by the fate of Mr. Maddox, sent his children to church, but was ashamed to come there himself; and, finally, abandoning himself to drinking and intoxication, was cut down in an instant by a fit of apoplexy, not having the power to do what his friend had done, even if he wished it; not having a moment spared him for a religious act or thought. As he returned one night from the tavern, no sooner had he knocked at his own door, than he fell down dead. He went from his cups straight to judgment.

The end of Mr. Chatteris was still more dreadful. Worn out with perpetual drunkenness, when his last sickness overtook him, it pleased God to deprive him of his reason. I saw him, but to no purpose. He had spectres of terror continually before his eyes, and curses upon his tongue. Whenever the windows of his chamber were open, his ravings and imprecations were heard by those who passed by; and thus he died without a single beam of mental light to warn him of the horrors of his condition.

Mr. Stamford died less fearfully, and after having received the sacrament of the Lord's body and blood. I administered it to him when he was in the last agony; but I have never heard that he had been previously at church, or that he had performed before any religious act whatever. I was sent for to him very early in the morning, and found him already speechless. Yet he still possessed his faculties, and made known to me by signs his wish to partake of the bread and wine, with which I at once complied; and he died immediately afterwards.

Mr. Burton, the last whom I shall mention, married the kept woman of his friend. He is still living, but in the greatest indigence: reduced to want by his vices. He still lives, however; and God grant that he may repent!

CHAPTER IV.

OLD MR. BROOM.—PARENTAL ANGER.

ONE morning, as I was walking according to custom through my parish, I met the apothecary, who informed me that Mr. Broom was in the most imminent danger; that medicine, which had been unsuccessful from the beginning, was now become hopeless; and that the whole family laboured under the greatest anxiety and alarm, lest he might die without being reconciled to his son.

I turned my footsteps in the direction of his house, with the intention of doing every thing in my power to accomplish this desirable object; and having a mile to walk, I had abundant time to reflect upon all the arguments and motives which appeared likely to be forcible and effectual at such an awful moment. Indeed, as I was perfectly acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, it had engaged my consideration very often before; but I had never yet met with such an opportunity of opening the subject to the sick man, as gave me a fair prospect of success.

In fact, this son had used him so ill in various ways, that it demanded the full exercise of the most difficult Christian virtues, even in a father, to banish all exasperated feelings, and to pronounce pardon and forgiveness. Mr. Broom was now very far advanced in age, and had passed the utmost limit assigned by our fine burial Psalm to the life of man; he was upwards of fourscore years. In his younger days, and up to a late period, he had never known pecuniary distress. For the last few years, in consequence of his son's mismanagement, he had been utterly unable to discharge, with punctuality, the usual demands upon his fortune. His own comforts were necessarily abridged; hospitality, in which he delighted, was entirely at an end; poverty seemed to hang over the close of his existence. All this being justly attributed to his son, he had never spoken to me about him without marking, in the strongest terms, his abhorrence of his son's conduct. I believe, indeed, that the impossibility which he felt of subduing his angry passions, in that particular respect, had lately occasioned on his part a neglect of public worship in the parish church, where in former times he had been a regular attendant; and although he had been prevailed upon to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at home during his sickness, yet the hostile workings of his mind towards his son had

prevented him from reaping that degree of comfort and satisfaction from it, which might otherwise have been reasonably expected.

These were the circumstances under which a last effort was now to be made.

As I approached the gate of a small garden in the front of his house, the windows being open for air, his moanings reached my ears. His pains had been long, and were dreadfully severe. I was deeply affected, and almost in despair, as to my own power of fulfilling my errand with the requisite courage and ability. I prayed silently for help from above.

At the door I was met by two of his married daughters, who had seen me coming, and were ready to admit me. They were shedding tears profusely, which added to my distress; but at once they exclaimed (for that was the thought nearest to their hearts,) "Oh! Sir, our father will die! The doctor has given him up, and our brother is not forgiven!" This was followed by deep sobbings and fresh tears.

"Is your brother himself desirous of being forgiven?" I said. "Oh! yes, Sir!" they answered immediately: "he has been here, again and again: but his father refuses to see him. Indeed, Sir, he has been a wicked son; but surely this is a proper time at last for forgiveness; and now our poor father is almost deprived of speech."

I hastened with them up stairs into the sick man's chamber. He was not in bed but upright, in a large easy chair, supported by pillows. Without opening his eyes he was aware of my approach, and for an instant ceased to moan. Death sat evidently on his faded and shrunken countenance. I took a seat by his side, and having ascertained by a common question about his situation that he was still able to speak, although in so low and faint a tone that I could not understand him without putting my ear close to his mouth; I directed that all the persons in the room should retire; and I did it aloud, that he might know we were quite alone, and that there might be as little as possible to embarrass him. His daughters however, and a female servant, who had lived with him for many years, remained at the door within hearing; which very fortunately I did not discover, until the whole was over; it would have disturbed me exceedingly.

I then took the dying man's hand into my own, both because I was in earnest, and because I wished him to think me so—He gave me no sign to encourage me—His hand lay lifeless in mine, whilst I gently pressed it. Without doubt he suspected my chief business with him, and was reluctant to enter upon it; but he did not repulse me altogether.

I began; "I am sorry, my poor old friend, to see you in so much pain. You have suffered long and severely."

“Very, very,” was his almost inaudible reply. I continued, “But no pain and suffering come to any man by chance, or at random. The great God above directs every thing according to his own will, and his will is guided by infinite wisdom and infinite goodness. He is not like one of us, who trouble and torment each other, for some mean and unworthy gratification, or with some wicked purpose in view. He has told us himself that he derives no pleasure from the misery of his creatures. When he chastises us, therefore, it can only be for our own profit. Nor will he chastise us longer than he knows to be necessary.”

“I pray constantly that he would take me,” said Mr. Broom, scarcely able to repress his groans. “We must all wait,” I replied, “for his own good time; but we may pray to him with propriety to shorten our sufferings, if we only add to our prayer as our blessed Saviour did, ‘thy will, O God, and not mine be done.’—He alone knows, my dear Sir, whether your patience, your resignation, your fortitude, have yet been sufficiently exercised, to entitle you, through Jesus Christ, to a crown of glory in Heaven. Or there may be some important worldly business still remaining to be arranged, for which in kindness he withholds the last blow.”

“I have done all I can,” was his answer.

“I fear not,” I said, interrupting him—“I fear, I fear, though all your common affairs may perhaps be settled, there is one great and most necessary thing yet undone; and I should grieve, and every friend would grieve, and especially your own family, if you were to leave this world without doing it—I fear you have not forgiven your son.”

“He has injured me, his own father,” he said, with somewhat of animation for a dying man, and which indicated the poignancy of his feelings upon this painful subject, “he has injured me, in such a way, as few sons have ever done to their fathers before.”

“Alas! alas!” I instantly rejoined; “and have not we offended our Heavenly Father, and abused his goodness more than any son ever abused the goodness of his father on earth? And what excuse could *we* plead for ourselves, if he were to mete out the same measure to *us*, which we mete out to others? When we stand before him to be judged for our deeds, which you are soon to do, what if he should say, ‘will *you* presume to ask *me* to forgive *you* your sins against me, sins too so great and so numerous, when you have left the world without forgiving the comparatively few and trivial offences against yourselves?’ Who could stand in his sight without confusion and dismay; without calling the mountains to fall upon him and cover him from the face of the Almighty; if the just Judge were thus to speak?”

The old man was visibly moved, and fervently ejaculated, “God have mercy upon me!”

I too was moved; but I caught up the auspicious words, and continued without a moment's delay, but with a faltering voice, "May it be so—May God indeed have mercy upon you! But might he not say, 'Why? On what ground? Have you not been taught by your Redeemer, whom I sent from Heaven, to pray to me daily, that I would forgive *you* your trespasses, on the very condition that you forgive them who trespass against you? But you have not performed this condition, and stand therefore self-condemned. You have passed judgment upon yourself, out of your own mouth, every time that you uttered that prayer. Your own son, the very fruit of your own loins, was unforgiven by you to the last moment.'"

"I forgive him! Oh! I forgive him!" said the poor trembling man, quite overcome.

"God be praised!" I exclaimed, pressing his hand eagerly, and with an emotion which added, no doubt, to the efficacy of my words. "God be praised for working this change in your heart!" But soon recovering myself, and following the advantage that was gained, I proposed to send immediately for young Mr. Broom, that he might hear himself this joyful declaration of pardon from his father's own lips.

But he stopped me at once, and said, "Oh, no! I cannot see him! I have no wish to see him! I forgive him! Let that be enough!"

"Alas! alas! I replied, it cannot be enough, even to satisfy your own mind, to prepare you to meet your God with a perfect peace and tranquillity of soul. Much less can it satisfy your friends, your family, your once prodigal, but now afflicted, penitent son, who waits hourly at your door with tears and entreaties that he may be admitted to your sick bed; that he may throw himself upon his knees before you; that he may receive from your own mouth forgiveness and happiness."

"I wish him all happiness, from my heart," said Mr. Broom, catching my last word, and still dreadfully averse from any thought of seeing his son.

"But how will he be assured of this, my good Sir, if you refuse him his just and natural desire, of seeing you; of confessing his own unworthiness before you; of asking pardon of you in his own person; of hearing you bless him with your expiring breath? Can he have any certainty of conviction in his own mind, that you have indeed forgiven him, and that you have sincerely prayed to God to bless and prosper him whilst you thus continue to cast him out of your presence? Will he not go down himself with sorrow to the grave; conscious, as he must be, that he has embittered your last days, and necessarily fearful that a father's curse will still cling to him, unless he both sees and hears you, before you depart for ever, in the delightful act of reconciliation and returning love? Ah my good old friend! Pray to God to help you to secure the astonishing

peace and satisfaction of mind which such conduct will give you. Pray to God to enable you to obtain this the hardest of all victories, this victory over yourself!"

He was touched, but he hesitated in silence. I too was silent. At length he said, "Spare me this new pain; the sight of him will kill me at once." His words were mingled with groans.

I was reduced for a moment to despair, and about to retire from the battle; but rousing myself once more and finally, I renewed the charge in the following manner.

"I came here, Mr. Broom, to join my prayers with your own, that it would please God of his gracious goodness to release you from your sufferings; but I see now too well the cause of those sufferings, and I see also that the purpose of them is not fulfilled; and therefore I cannot pray that they should yet be terminated. Sometimes the ways of Providence are dark and mysterious; but here his own finger is strikingly manifest. He is severe, but he is most mercifully severe. Had it been possible to save your soul without this protracted bodily pain, no doubt, at the age of eighty-five years, you would have fallen spontaneously, as it were, like the mellow fruit from the tree; or you would have been gathered to your ancestors, like the shock of wheat, that cometh in, in its season. But it could not be.—Had you died so, you would have gone to meet *Him*, who came to make peace between God and you, with hatred in your heart; and you could not have stood before him. Behold then the infinite unspeakable mercy of Heaven! God scourges; for thus alone could he effectually heal. He inflicts pain, agonizing pain; he prolongs it; he increases it; beyond what your advanced age might seem to be able to endure. The great act, for which he does so, he still puts into your own power. Oh! justify his doings by performing it; and then may you depart in peace, and in his favour!"

"Ah!" he cried, "let it be as you will—Let my son be called."

What were the feelings of the old man at this instant I do not know: mine were overpowered, and floods of tears gushed forth from my eyes. I was wound up to the highest pitch by the length of the exertion, by the uncertainty of the result, by the magnitude of the interest at stake; and now that the whole was suddenly crowned with success, I could bear it no longer. I kissed his hand with ardour, started from my seat and rushed to the door. There I found the daughters and the servant, with streaming eyes and clasped hands, thanking heaven. They had heard all, and they showered their blessings upon me.

Search was immediately made for young Mr. Broom; he was not to be found.

Ah! thought I, Providence will not always indulge our waywardness. This youth, who seeks a place for repentance with sighs and tears, cannot now find it; and this aged man, who, after the most

painful struggle, at last conquered himself, will not enjoy his victory.

However, it pleased God to decree otherwise. Young Mr. Broom arrived before it was too late. The scene was pathetic in the extreme. He threw himself at his dying father's feet, and scarcely rose from that humiliating posture till his father had breathed his last sigh. The trying interval was but short. The good Providence of God seemed to verify the account which I had given of it, afflicting only to save, and withdrawing the rod when the heart was changed.

I retraced my steps homewards, buried in deep thought upon the interesting and awful circumstances which had just passed; and at times glowing with inward delight and with gratitude to God for the noble opportunity of doing good with which my sacred office had furnished me, and which I would not have exchanged at that moment for rank, or wealth, or power.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. ATKINSON AND MRS. BRERETON—BAPTISM.

§ 1. MRS. ATKINSON.

THIS LADY had been born and bred up amongst the Quakers; but, having married a Presbyterian without the permission of the congregation to which she had belonged, she was excluded from the fraternity altogether. From that time she attached herself to the Presbyterian forms of worship, and constantly frequented a Chapel of that sect in her immediate neighbourhood. Meanwhile a numerous family sprung up, especially of daughters; the eldest of whom accompanied their mother to her Chapel; but it was understood that in matters of religion they were to choose entirely for themselves. This was the wish of both their parents; their father was no bigot to his sect, but an advocate for perfect freedom of conscience; their mother, not having been brought up in Presbyterianism, had no hereditary predilection for it. The consequence was, that the daughters, having become acquainted with the then Curate of the parish, a man of zeal and ability in his profession, were gradually brought to be Church-women, upon principle and conviction; and they received the Sacrament of Baptism, when they were now arrived at years of discretion. The rest of the family followed their example in coming to Church; but Mrs. Atkinson, at the time of my settlement in the Parish, had not herself been yet baptized; although she had partaken with the utmost regularity and devotion of the other Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, both here in the country, and in London, where she resided during the winter months. The Curate had been consulted from time to time on this very point; indeed Mrs. Atkinson had previously informed him of her situation before she presented herself for the first time at the holy table; but the thing went on from year to year without any decision being taken upon it. Upon the whole it might seem that he did not consider Baptism as necessary in her circumstances. She had indeed all the essential practical principles of the Christian religion in their full operation upon her life and manners; and this he might have thought sufficient.

However, Mrs. Atkinson fell sick; and in that condition, so calculated for serious reflection on the past, and an anxious looking

forward into futurity, she reverted in her thoughts to the subject of Baptism, and desired her daughters to consult me about it. They did so; and I gave my opinion immediately and at once, that the ceremony, under all the circumstances of the case, was both expedient and necessary. On the following day it happened that I saw the Bishop of the Diocese; and he having concurred with me in the same opinion, and also having furnished me with full powers to act upon it, I waited only for a favourable moment.

The reasons for their mother's baptism, which I assigned to the young ladies in my conversation with them, were substantially as follows. "It seems clear," I said, "in the first place, whatever the Quakers may allege to the contrary, that the New Testament represents Baptism as essentially necessary to all; allowing merely what must always be allowed in cases of positive commands. Our Saviour's command to his Disciples was, that they should go and baptize all nations; and he added, that they, who believed and were baptized, should be saved. He told Nicodemus, that no man could enter into the kingdom of God, unless he were born again of water and of the Spirit. After his departure, the Apostles acted upon this principle; all their converts were immediately baptized, and to those who were touched with their preaching, and earnestly inquired what they must do to be saved, they answered universally, repent and be baptized. Cornelius, the Centurion, is a striking instance. He was a man who was already in the actual practice of the Christian virtues; and the Holy Ghost was also communicated to him in an extraordinary manner; yet was he baptized afterwards, before they accounted him a partaker of the Christian covenant.

"The order then was general, and the obedience to it was general also; insomuch that even children were baptized, probably by the Apostles themselves, but certainly by their successors, and during all the first ages of Christianity; and it is almost inconceivable, when a thing is so clearly and positively ordained, that men should begin at length to sophisticate about it, and to find reasons for evading and neglecting it. However, they did this: and a sect arose, which denied the necessity of baptism, in the case of children when born of Christian parents; affirming that the children were sanctified by the parents, and needed nothing more.

"This appears to me to be very absurd. We know nothing at all about children being sanctified by their parents, so as to make baptism unnecessary; but it seems plain enough in Scripture, that all are required to be baptized; and, if we were mistaken in this notion, no harm could result from our acting upon it; whereas a mistake on the other side might be followed by terrible consequences. In short, wherever there is a command, or substantial reasons for thinking so, it ought to be obeyed, and the rest must be left to God. It argues a great want of humility, and a foolish desire of modelling

every thing according to our own ideas, and indeed of setting up our own scanty ideas against infinite wisdom, if we do not take, as we find, that which is proved to come from heaven. Suppose we could discover no use whatever in baptism; yet what of that? The command remains the same; Go ye and baptize all nations; repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins. To controvert this; and to attempt to draw a line; and to say that it is applicable to one and not to another; is unquestionably a great want of Christian meekness, and docility; and of wisdom too. For what is to be gained by omitting the ceremony? Is it not as simple as any ceremony can be, and quite remote from any thing superstitious? No one mistakes it so much as to suppose that it will operate like a charm; but we may well suppose that it will be accompanied by God's grace and benediction.

“But perhaps it will be said, that baptism consisting of two parts, the outward and the inward; the inward part, sanctification by the Spirit, is all that is essential, and that this constitutes the whole of regeneration; so that if a person be sanctified by the Spirit, that person is regenerate, and stands in need of no sprinkling with water. This may be all very subtle and ingenious; but Jesus Christ says, that we must be born of the water, and of the Spirit. He makes no distinctions with respect to the one and the other. He does not tell us, that one is the symbol, and the other the thing signified; and consequently that one is sufficient, and that the other may be neglected. This is the invention of men, who would always be wise above what is written. Besides, how are we to know that any person is sanctified by the Spirit, so as to be sufficiently qualified for eternity, and entitled to neglect any ordinance of Scripture? We can only judge by the fruits, which show themselves in the life of that person; a very vague criterion indeed for us mortals, who are so blind, and so easily deceived! And of this I am sure, that the very best Christians are so far from entertaining such a favourable opinion of themselves, that they would be rather disposed to disclaim every thing, than to pretend that they might safely break the least of God's commandments.

“The same reasoning will apply more strongly to all, who might assume, that, because they have habitually complied with a more important ordinance, they may therefore omit the less important, as they will call the one and the other. In fact, we know nothing about more or less important. Every ordinance is enjoined for our good, whether we are aware of the particular good or not; and we cannot pick and choose this or that, just as we may think of their several uses; but we must fulfil all, with an entire prostration of every faculty to the supreme Ruler of the world.

“In the case of your excellent mother, it is manifest that the ceremony would be a comfort to her. She has considered the matter,

and taken advice upon it repeatedly; and her present anxiety is a proof, that she does not acquiesce in the advice formerly given. I feel confident too, that, with her good understanding, she cannot be actuated by superstitious motives. And who knows, but that a gracious God pleased to see his commands conscientiously obeyed, may bless the ceremony in an extraordinary manner, and pour down upon her such an abundant measure of his grace, as may enable her to support the approach of death with an unshaken fortitude, and to look into the blissful realms beyond with unutterable joy."

These arguments and explanations were more than sufficient to persons already predisposed to adopt my opinion; and Mrs. Atkinson having been made acquainted with them, as well as also with the Bishop's concurrence, and her disorder appearing to increase; I was soon afterwards suddenly sent for at night, and admitted into her bed-chamber to perform the ceremony.

The scene was very striking, and interesting. The daughters surrounded the sick bed; the younger melted into tears, with the thought of losing a beloved mother; the elder firm and composed, by the conviction that her spirit was about to ascend to heaven. The sick lady herself, perfectly tranquil and placid, patience and resignation beaming forth from every feature of her pallid countenance, lay supported by pillows, in a state of complete weakness and exhaustion; yet, when she saw me, she attempted to speak; but her words were too faintly uttered to admit of their being understood. This was a great loss. She was a good woman; and was now upon the confines, as it were, of the two worlds; and might look into both, and give us an edifying account of the vanity of one, and the solidity of the other.

I entreated her not to fatigue herself unnecessarily with any endeavour to converse with me; especially as I was satisfied as to her fitness in every respect for the sacred rite about to be celebrated; I knew that she believed, and that her practice, allowing for human infirmity, was correspondent to her belief. Considering the case as one of urgency, I used my discretion in shortening the forms; and having soon concluded, I kissed her hand, and withdrew. Her conduct throughout was not like that of an inhabitant of earth, but of heaven, to which she seemed already to belong. She lived, however for a considerable period afterwards, sometimes better, sometimes worse; and having been removed from my parish for a change of air, she died at a distance from me, and is now, I trust, amongst the blessed spirits above.

§ 2. MRS. BRERETON.

NOT having observed Mrs. Brereton at Church for several Sundays, and having inquired of the pew-openers, if they knew the cause of her absence; I was informed that she had been ill, and was gone into the country, to a more retired and quiet place, to try the effect of a change of air and scene. Her situation, although she had no children of her own, was a responsible and laborious one, as she was the wife of a master-manufacturer, who had many apprentices in his family; her constitution was delicate, and our climate relaxing. The change, however, as I learned in the evening of the same day, had done no good; and she was returned, as they supposed, to die at home; all hope of saving her life having vanished. In fact, her disorder was a rapid decline.

It was rapid indeed, and brought to my mind very forcibly the extreme uncertainty of human things. I had seen her, no long time ago, in the full enjoyment of youth and health; her person was beautiful, and her manners correspondently pleasing. This added to the seriousness of my meditations, and to my commiseration of her present circumstances; but God knows best how to govern his own world, and he is as merciful as he is wise. I was shocked; but I reposed in *him*.

No message had been sent to summon me to the sick bed; but I was impatient to do something in so extraordinary a case; being confident, indeed, from my general experience, that even a few words, and still more a prayer, might be a comfort and consolation to her in her last moments. In truth, it was but my usual practice, in less striking cases, to call unsummoned at the houses of sick persons; and, having ascertained the state of their health, if I saw an opening for any thing further, to proffer my official assistance.

I did so now. My first interview was with Mr. Brereton's cousin, who was watching over the manufactory, during the necessary attendance of the poor husband himself in his wife's sick chamber. He informed me immediately that Mrs. Brereton had been brought up a Baptist; that since her residence here she had been a regular attendant at my Church, although not at the altar; and that probably she would have continued steadily in communion with us, had it not been for her sickness, which had brought her own family about her; and thus revived her former persuasions. "And this was the reason, Sir," he said, "why my cousin has not sent to you. His situation is one of great delicacy. He is very averse

from all interference with the religious opinions and practices of his wife; and he is besides unwilling to give any offence to her mother and other relations."

It was unreasonable to object to this statement; and I therefore merely asked whether any Baptist Minister was in attendance upon her. "I think not," was his answer. "Some time ago, a man of eminence in that sect, an inhabitant of the neighbouring parish, came to visit her, at the desire of her family; but he seems to have discontinued his visits now, when I should suppose she might want them most; and my cousin is much disconcerted with his apparent negligence."

Under these circumstances of absolute spiritual destitution, I thought it my duty to offer my services, both to pray with her, and to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and I desired to see Mr. Brereton himself, to converse with him on the subject, if it were possible. In a short time he came to me; but he seemed extremely reluctant to embrace my proposal; he expected, as he said, the Baptist Minister, that very day; and he thought his wife so ill, and so little in possession of her faculties at that moment, having just recovered from a convulsive fit, that he deemed her incapable of any religious act whatever.

It was difficult for me to interfere further; especially as the Baptist Minister was said to be coming, under whose charge her family had placed her. However, I prolonged the conversation, talking about the opinions of the Baptists, and then, to my amazement, I discovered that this poor dying lady had never been baptized at all. "What?" I asked, expressing my sorrow and surprise by my tone and manner; "is it possible, that she should have been permitted to approach so nearly to the close of her existence, and that no provision should have been made for the performance of the holy rite of baptism?"

"The Baptists," said Mr. Brereton, "do not seem to value that ordinance, as we do."—"Alas!" I continued, "there is so much fluctuation in the principles of almost all the sectaries, that you scarcely know what they are at any particular moment. The distinction of the Baptists from the other sects used to be, not that they omitted baptism, but that they administered it to persons of riper age, and by a complete immersion in water. In this case, it is needless to argue about the propriety of infant baptism. Poor Mrs. Brereton must be allowed to be of riper age, and fully prepared for the ceremony, both by her knowledge, and by her life and habits. And surely they cannot require a complete immersion, when it is physically impossible, or when death might be the consequence. Do they think it so essential, that the sacrament would be void without it? Or what mode have they adopted for the sick, lest they should die unbaptized? Although it is very certain that a

complete immersion was the usual practice, where there was abundance of water for the purpose; yet it is by no means certain that it was considered indispensable. On the contrary, it is scarcely credible that the three thousand persons converted on the day of Pentecost could have been baptized in that manner; and, in the case of a single family, that of Cornelius for example, the expression would naturally lead us to suppose that water was brought into the apartment where the family was assembled. St. Peter seeing the Holy Ghost bestowed upon them, exclaimed eagerly, 'Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?' I feel confident, therefore, in my own mind, that these persons were all baptized, by pouring water upon them, and not by dipping them. Undoubtedly, 'to dip,' is the true sense of the expression, 'to baptize;' and such a practice was extremely easy, where there were rivers or lakes, or baths, at hand; and also perfectly safe, in a hot climate, where bathing was in consequence a familiar custom of the people. But baptism must have been administered again and again, where immersion was impossible; and in our cold climate it would in general be positively dangerous. It is indeed a known fact, (I know the fact myself,) that persons have died in this country in consequence of diseases caught by immersion. Upon the whole, therefore, the present practice amongst ourselves of sprinkling only, is both necessary, and reasonable, and not inconsistent, as a symbol, with the end proposed. Thus, Sir, I have taken some pains to explain the matter to you; because I think it of the utmost importance, that the administration of this holy rite to Mrs. Brereton should not be delayed; and in order to justify you in proposing it to the Baptist Minister, if he should come, or to herself, if he should not; for I am sure you must yourself be anxious, under such afflicting circumstances, to escape the pang, which you might hereafter feel, if she departed hence without having been admitted into the Christian covenant." I studiously abstained from saying any thing about the legality of ministers.

Mr. Brereton, whatever might have been his former lukewarmness, was roused by these arguments; and he thanked me cordially for the great interest which I showed for his poor wife and himself, and agreed to act according to my advice. I therefore took my leave for the present, and promised to call on the following day; regretting, however, that a whole day might thus be lost; and not without fears that another opportunity might never occur.

Arriving the next day according to my engagement, I found that Mrs. Brereton was still worse, and that the Minister of her sect had not been with her. This seemed to me quite unaccountable; as I had always supposed that the Dissenters were particularly diligent in their attentions to the sick; and indeed that one cause of their popularity, above the established Clergy, had been the appa-

rent superior zeal, which they displayed, in communicating with their flocks. However, this Gentleman not having come forward in a time of need, it became now decidedly my duty, as being the lawful Parish Priest, to press more authoritatively the suggestions of yesterday, and to offer myself for their immediate execution.

Mr. Brereton still hesitated. His wife, he said, had fainted again to-day through exhaustion; and was now lying apparently more dead than alive. He had attempted to read to her, but she seemed not to listen; and if he put a question to her, she sometimes returned an incoherent answer. From all which he argued, that nothing could now be done.

I inquired if he had found a convenient opportunity of mentioning my call to her. He replied that he had, and that she desired I would accept her thanks for it; and moreover, that she expressed a wish to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, upon which she had heard me preach once or twice. With respect to baptism, having gently insinuated my remarks upon it, she made no observation at the time, and has been since incapable, in consequence of a paroxysm of her disorder.

There was undoubtedly some difficulty in my way beyond what appeared; and I began to fear that I should not be able to discover and remove it, so as to be of use to this poor lady, who had deeply engaged my interest. Miss Brereton being present to-day, and entering into the conversation, I renewed all the arguments of yesterday; and having stated, with all the force in my power, the presumptuousness, as it appeared to me, of looking for the Christian salvation without a compliance with the Christian ordinances, and more especially the initiatory one,—I added, that in case of death without baptism, I did not see, how I could legally perform the last sad and solemn rite of burial. My practice had been not to inquire into these matters, but to suppose that every thing had been correctly done. Here, however, the fact of non-baptism was accidentally made known to me, and I seemed to be deprived of all discretionary power.

In answer to this, Mr. Brereton informed me, that it had been already settled by his wife's family, that she should be interred with her ancestors and kindred, in their burying-place, at the Baptist Chapel, in the neighbouring town. I was glad of this, so far as it released me at once from an unpleasant alarm, and as there appeared to be no hope of the Baptism. However, Miss Brereton, having been much struck and affected with what I had said about it, went up to her sister-in-law's chamber, without previously mentioning her intention, and returned after no long absence with the joyful intelligence that Mrs. Brereton would be most happy to see me to-morrow, to pray with her, and that in the mean time she would reflect upon the other important subject. Upon this I departed, expressing my fervent hope that it might not be too late.

The morrow came, and I was punctual to the hour, which they had told me would be most suitable. I was delighted too to hear that my patient, though not better, was prepared to receive me, and even anxious for my arrival. I expected, however, a very affecting scene, and with difficulty stilled the trepidation which had begun; and I told Mr. Brereton, that if I found the baptism possible and advisable, I should perform it at once, on my own responsibility, without any reference to the Bishop of the Diocess, whose permission and directions, required by the Rubric, were utterly in this emergency beyond our power to obtain.

Having now been introduced into the sick chamber, I was obliged to go round the bed, the further side, to see the poor sufferer. I could readily conceive that it was with great difficulty she found a posture of momentary comparative ease; for I had already heard, that almost every bone had pierced the skin, and that the slightest pressure occasioned a new wound. She was lying with her emaciated body doubled down from the top to the middle of the bed, where the pillows were placed to support her head and back; and her countenance was thus nearly full towards me. Not a tinge of its former bloom remained; it was pale as death, and shrunken. Before I could speak, she was seized with a coughing fit, but it brought no colour into her face. Her husband, and her sister, whom I had not seen before, flew to her assistance; and after a short interval, being reinstated in her position, she became quiet and tranquil. I could perceive the drops of sweat standing thick on her brow. Every eye was upon her, full of anxious concern. At length she raised her own, now collected and composed in her thoughts, although her respiration was short and difficult. Her look betrayed no aberration of intellect, but betokened an entire possession of it, and a superior endowment; as if God had graciously enlarged it in this terrible extremity.

Her eyes having met mine, I immediately spoke, and said, "I am come, my dear Madam, to pray with you; and I accuse myself for not having been with you much sooner. Indeed I was entirely ignorant of your sickness, or I should have hastened long ago to offer you the comforts and consolations of our holy religion." Her countenance thanked me, and she moved her lips; but I caught no sounds.

I continued. "To talk must be painful to you; do not distress yourself to attempt it at present. I will read to you a few sentences out of a beautiful exhortation to the sick, which is to be found in our Prayer Book;" and immediately I began with the words, "Good sister, it is written in holy Scripture for our comfort and instruction, that we should patiently, and with thanksgiving, bear our heavenly Father's correction, whensoever by any manner of adversity it shall please his gracious goodness to visit us;" and so I went

on to the end of the paragraph, which speaks of our rising again from death with Christ, and dwelling with him in everlasting life.

There is something particularly soothing in this passage; when I have pronounced it with a slow, solemn, and pathetic tone, I have seen an agony of pain hushed into silence and submission. In the present instance, the dying lady seemed to drink in every word, and lay them to her heart. She closed her eyes, and scarcely breathed. Her husband and the rest of her friends were weeping, and trying to conceal their tears; it was unnecessary, she heeded them not; she was absorbed in her own meditations.

After a short pause, I then said, "Let us pray;" and immediately we all knelt down about the bed. She clasped her hands together, without opening her eyes, but with tokens of feeling and devotion. I went through the prayer for a sick person, when there appeareth small hope of recovery. In the midst of it I paused once or twice, to collect myself. She raised her eyes to ascertain the cause, and saw that I was sympathizing with her, and almost overcome, and unable to articulate. But the pauses were only for a moment, and at length I finished. She herself, however, continued to pray secretly, as I judged by her still clasped hands, and by the fixedness of her countenance, as if she were looking into the heavens above. I did not attempt to disturb this sacred silence. At last she turned her eyes on me, as expecting and wishing me to proceed.

I thought it a propitious time for the baptism; and she seemed now, by God's blessing, equal to the fatigues of the ceremony, which I intended to use my discretion in shortening for the occasion. Whilst her attention therefore was yet fully alive, having opened the office for the baptism of persons of riper years, I began, "Hear the words of the gospel," and I proceeded to the end of the exhortation, leaving out some things, and altering others, so as to make the whole of what I said precisely applicable to the case before me. I then took her hand, and said, "These things, my dear Madam, appear to me very convincing, very authoritative, very consolatory; and to leave us no choice. I think they must appear in the same light to you too. And wonderfully merciful has God been to you, in sparing you to perform this great act of entering into covenant with him through Jesus Christ. You believe the Scriptures?"

She pressed my hand, and replied audibly, "I do." She was elevated with a sort of supernatural strength, by the singular interest and momentous importance of her situation. I continued, "You repent sincerely of all your errors, and all your sins; omissions and commissions; and you trust for pardon of them solely in the sufferings and merits of Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven given to men whereby we may be saved?" She replied again, as audibly as before, "I do;" and then she added, "God for-

give me, and bless me, for Christ's sake." A drop from each eye bespoke her humble piety. Having advanced so far with such unexpected success, I now put the question, "Will you then be baptized in this faith?" Her answer was fervent, that she wished it without delay.

Upon this, in imitation of the great Apostle, St. Peter, whose steps I was following at an humble distance, I exclaimed, "Can any one forbid water, that this person should not be baptized, who repents and believes?" Her sister, unbaptized herself, hastened out of the room to procure the water; anxious, no doubt, whatever might have been her own prejudices, to contribute what she could to alleviate the last moments of so near and dear a relation.

Meanwhile I read some of the more essential prayers, and, when the water was brought, the prayer of consecration; and then dipping my fingers into the water, and inquiring her name, I sprinkled her forehead, and baptized her according to the form prescribed by the Author of our faith.

Her head had fallen a little upon the pillow; but when I approached her with the water, she raised it up herself, and turning her whole face towards me, she presented her forehead direct to my hand, and received the sacred symbol, and afterwards the sign of the cross, in a reverential silence, scarcely breathing, and wholly absorbed in the holy rite. The intenseness of the exertion, however, brought on a second coughing fit, from which she was not recovered so easily, or so soon as before. This determined me not to think then of the other sacrament; so I concluded the service, and withdrew, gently pressing her hand, and thanking God aloud for this signal instance of his mercy, in admitting her into the Christian covenant, and in making *me* the instrument. She followed me with her eyes, which bore witness to her gratitude, but she was unable to speak.

I hurried away, when I left the chamber, unable also myself to speak to the rest of the family; nor did any subsequent duty of the day erase from my mind a scene of such deep and touching interest.

On the following day I hoped to be able to administer the other sacrament; and that an opportunity might not be lost by the delay of preparation, I brought with me every thing which was necessary. For this purpose I had a small basket that contained the bread and wine, a napkin, and a plate, without which it would have been impossible for the sick poor to have partaken of the Lord's Supper with the proper decency, or even at all.

The servant at the door told me that her mistress was much worse, and had passed a very restless night. Mr. Brereton himself soon came to me, and confirmed this affecting intelligence. I showed him my basket, and inquired with earnestness, whether, by waiting and

watching for an hour or two the fluctuations of her disorder, an interval might not be seized upon sufficiently long to impart to her the inestimable blessing that still remained in store; but I had the mortification to hear from him, that she was not capable of it, either in body, or in mind; nor likely to be so.

"Do not speak thus," I said; "God only knows! But tell me; did she seem to be comforted at all by what we did yesterday?"

Did she appear to recur to it in her thoughts, or did she mention it in any way?"—"Nothing," he answered, "could be more satisfactory. She spoke of her baptism repeatedly in the course of the evening; and it was manifest that it was always uppermost in her thoughts, whilst she had the power of thinking rationally." "Why then," said I, "should we not endeavour by every means to provide for her, in her approaching crisis, the recollection of a second comfort, not unequal perhaps to the first, which may give her an additional strength to endure the pang of separation from this world and from yourself?"—

He was affected by this appeal to his feelings; but he did not embrace my offer. "I will leave then," I said, "my basket here; and I most earnestly beg, that you will not scruple to send for me, if you see the chance of a possibility of accomplishing my wish." He attended me to the door, thanking me again and again, but stating his conviction that nothing more could be done. However, I remained at home beyond my usual custom, in the expectation that a message might arrive; and every rap at the door seemed to announce it. But none arrived.

The next morning I walked again to Mrs. Brereton's. The window shutters seemed to be closed, and there was a deep silence and solitude about the house. "Death," I said to myself, "reigns here." However, I rung, and was admitted by a maid-servant, who undeceived me. I asked if I could see any of the family; she went to inquire; and at length Mr. Brereton joined me in the parlour. He was worn out with sorrow, fatigue, and watching; and he gave me a melancholy account of our poor patient. "The sacrament," he said, "was quite out of the question;" and he now thought it absolutely dangerous to go into the sick room.

I must confess, I was by no means satisfied; and I expressed a wish to see his sister. Little difficulties, as I should have called them, had before appeared to *him* to be insuperable; but she had conquered them all at once, by going directly to the sick person herself; and I could scarcely help thinking but that the same might be done now.

She came to me, and I told her candidly, that I expected more encouragement from *her* than I had just received from her brother.

However, she was of the same opinion with him. "Her sister-in-law," she said, "appeared this morning not to know her; and with respect to the danger of going into the sick room, being herself delicate in health, she had been ordered by the medical men to enter it as little as possible. Besides," she continued, "there must I suppose, be some persons to take the sacrament with her; and whom shall we find for that purpose? Her own relations, you know, Sir, being Baptists, cannot be asked to do it."

"True," I replied eagerly, and with some surprise in my countenance; "but there is the poor lady's husband; there is his cousin; there is *you*."—"Ah! Sir," she said in a moment, and with trepidation; "I could not venture upon such a thing. I am not prepared."—"Not prepared, my good lady?" I rejoined, still with a tone of surprise, but mixing gentleness with it, lest I might do mischief; "alas! alas! you have too good an opportunity for preparation. Your own health, you have just informed me, is delicate, and therefore precarious; but you have besides a terrible lesson before your eyes of the uncertainty of human life, which a kind Providence intends, no doubt, for the instruction of this family. Here you have the mistress of it cut down, like a flower, in the bloom of youth and beauty. You have been a daily witness of the grief occasioned by this unexpected blow; and it has not passed over your head, like a summer's cloud, without exciting, I may well presume, many a serious thought, and many a pious resolution, with regard to yourself. Can there be a better preparation than the close view of death itself advancing with rapid strides, as he has done in this house, and laying waste before him youth, and health, and strength? Shall God preach to us with this mighty, terrific voice, and we will not hear?"

As I proceeded in this manner, I assumed naturally a more solemn tone. She was somewhat overpowered by it, but excused herself by saying, that the effect of her sister-in-law's sickness had been very much weakened by the incessant cares of the family, which had devolved upon herself; and that many perplexing and vexatious circumstances had fallen out to disturb and unsettle her thoughts. "However, Sir," she added, "I will get ready in the best manner that I am able, and I will watch diligently for an opportunity that may occur; especially as I know that poor Mrs. Brereton herself was very desirous of receiving the sacrament.

Upon this I took my leave; begging that she would recollect that nothing must be considered an obstacle with respect to myself; that I had seen every possible scene of affliction and misery amongst the sick, and the dying; and that nothing new, or unexpected, could

take place to make me at all indisposed to the performance of my duty. She seemed to understand me, and said, "then I do not despair. You will perhaps hear from me." I did not however hear till the next morning, which was Sunday, when I was desired to pray for Mrs. Brereton in the Church. It was done. She died before the evening-service, and was buried according to the original intention, amongst the Baptists.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BARTON FAMILY—PENITENCE.

§ 1. ANN AND MARY BARTON.

Soon after my settlement in this parish, I was sent for to visit a Mrs. Barton, who lived in a distant part of it. At that time I was not acquainted with her character, or connexions; nor had I any opportunity to inquire before I went to see her.

I found her in a small cottage, evidently a person in very low circumstances, and surrounded with all the tokens of poverty. She was quite alone, and sitting in a chair by a miserable fire. I could not perceive, however, any marks of sickness about her in her general appearance, but to all my questions about her health, she answered in a melancholy desponding tone, without further explanation, “that her hour was coming.”

I conjectured that the disorder was in her mind, rather than her body; and I endeavoured to ascertain her history, with the view of discovering also, what might be most proper for me to say, or do, for her benefit. Entering therefore largely into conversation with her, at length I obtained all the information which I wanted; although, I must confess, I had some doubts of her sincerity. Indeed, to believe her own story, she was like the good Patriarchs of old, who vexed their righteous souls with seeing the wickedness that was all around them, and their own inability to correct it.

It appeared that she had been born, and brought up, and married in Buckinghamshire; and I perceived that she still worked in this parish at the trade which she had learned in that county, and which, I believe, is universal there amongst the women. The implements of it were lying on a table beside her. “*There,*” she said, “there was some sense of decency and religion in the poor people. Every Sabbath-day they went to Church, men, women and children. Here a person attempting to do such a thing would be pointed at, and called a Presbyterian; and would be unable to live in peace with her neighbours. What do you think, Sir, they did with your little book against cursing and swearing, which you sent amongst us but the other day? Why, Sir, they actually trampled it under

their feet in the dirt; and truly they seldom open their mouths but to curse and swear."

I was not ignorant of the deplorable state of this distant part of my parish. As to swearing, I heard it myself perpetually, as I passed their houses in my morning walks, and sometimes I found husbands and wives fighting as well as cursing each other. The very children lisped in oaths. This induced me to put forth a little tract upon the subject; and though I was not sanguine in my expectations of good to arise from it, yet certainly I could not have conceived that it would have been treated with so unusual an indignity as to be trodden in the mire.

However, it had awakened the slumbering conscience of this poor woman. "Ah! Sir," she continued, "I have given too much into the ways of my neighbours, for the sake of being in peace with them. But I cannot bear it any longer. I am growing old; and I know not what is the matter with me; but I think the Lord is warning me to get ready for the next world; and so, Sir, I have sent for *you*; and I hope you will do what you can for me to save my soul. I see by your little book that you wish to do us good, both here and hereafter."

Having professed my desire to serve her, I said, "the best thing, my good woman, which seems to be in your power at present is, to go back into your native country. As the Angels said to Lot, so say I to *you*; up, and get you out of this place; for if the Lord do not destroy this wicked place now, he will certainly destroy the people, both body and soul, in hell hereafter; unless they amend their lives, and turn to him in prayers and tears."

"Ah! Sir," she replied immediately, "it is true enough; but how can I leave a place at once, where I have been settled so long; where my husband gets plenty of work; and where several of my sons and daughters, now married, are living with their young families, and want their poor mother, for something or other, almost every hour?"

"Well," I said; "this is not an unnatural feeling; but if your salvation be at stake; if the temptations and trials, in the midst of which you live here, are too great for your present strength; undoubtedly you ought to fly from them, and go where you can set yourself, seriously and quietly, to prepare for your latter end."

"Yes, Sir," she replied; "but there is a still greater difficulty. This is our parish to look to in sickness or any other trouble; and if we were to go back into Buckinghamshire, it is not likely that we should get a new settlement there, where rent is so cheap; and then what would become of us?"

"You forget," I said, "what your Bible tells you of the good Providence of God, which goes with us wherever we go; without which not a sparrow falls to the ground, and which feeds the young

ravens that cry, and clothes the lilies of the field in all their beauty. But men are of more value in God's eye than many sparrows; and he has promised to supply all their wants, if they seek his kingdom, and obey his laws. However I am not commanded to tell *you*, as the Angels were to tell Lot, that there are no means of safety but in flight. What I say is the mere word of a man. With God nothing is impossible; and if he see fit, he can endue you with sufficient strength to work out your salvation even here. Yet you are aware that hitherto you have failed; and in my judgment it looks like tempting God, to go on, day after day, and year after year, of your own free will and choice, exposing yourself to dangers which threaten your ruin, and expecting *him*, with or without reason, to throw his protecting shield over you."

In answer to this, she repeated, and enlarged upon all her former objections, having nothing new to say; and it was manifest that she was resolved to be saved here, or no where; so I inquired whether she could not at least move away to some more orderly part of the parish, where she might live piously and virtuously without being ridiculed or hooted at by her neighbours. This suggestion, however, was as little relished as the other. She had lived, she said, in this house, ever since she had been in the parish; it was moderately rented; it was conveniently situated for her husband's work; to remove from it would carry her away from her grand-children who depended upon her; and besides, where could she find another house? Every lodging was crowded already.

"Well then," I said, "since you seem determined to make no painful or inconvenient sacrifice of this kind for your everlasting welfare, what is it that you intend to do? Have you made up your mind to wait quietly where you are, like Lot's sons-in-law, and so perish in your sins? Or, on the other hand, to amend your life; and, in spite of scorn, to practise the duties which you have so long neglected; and thus, by striving to fulfil God's commands in the midst of a wicked generation, to entitle yourself to the powerful assistance of his Holy Spirit; without which you can do nothing to any effectual purpose? For instance; that we may proceed step by step; since it pleased God to stir your heart a little, have you been to Church?"

"I cannot say that I have, Sir;" was her answer. "I will tell you no falsehood. The Church, you know, Sir, is nearly two miles from us; and when we get there, the poor can find no room, but slips and corners, from which it is impossible to see or hear."

"You are mistaken," I said, "with respect to the present circumstances of the Church. There are now many comfortable sittings, fitted up on purpose for the poor; and in the afternoon every decent person may be seated in a pew in front of the minister. But, if this were not so; remember what David said; that he had

rather be a door-keeper in God's house, than dwell in the richest palaces of the ungodly. It would be no bad proof of humbleness and docility of temper, and of a pious wish to please God, if you did your best under unfavourable circumstances, and then left the rest to *him*; and at all events, if you were compelled to stand afar off, and did it not by choice, like the poor contrite Publican, you might smite your breast as he did, in some corner of the Church, and say inwardly, God be merciful to me a sinner! This is the conduct which God will accept and bless. But to stay away from Church altogether, because you cannot be seated so well as you might wish, shows nothing of the pious David's spirit; and it shows also that religion is but a secondary, or inferior object with you. Do you expect to be saved without any public worship of God?"

"No, Sir, indeed," she answered; "and I have not neglected it altogether; but knowing the great distance of the Church, and hearing of the inconvenience of it, and the want of room, I have been once or twice to our little Chapel here, which is a great deal nearer, and is besides open at a better time for the poor, and where they make much of us, and place us in nice warm pews."

"Very well," I said; "I hope you have been edified; although, perhaps, you have not taken the best method for improving yourself, and for bringing down God's blessing upon you. But what have you learnt?"

"Why, Sir," she answered, "the minister seemed to be a very good man, and he told us a great many good things; but there was one thing which he said over and over again, as if he could never say it often enough; which has made me so low and sorrowful, as you see me now." "And what was that, good woman?" I inquired rather eagerly; and her answer was, as far as I could comprehend it, that he dwelt particularly upon certain inward feelings, which he affirmed to be essentially necessary to salvation; so that, as she understood it, she could not be saved, unless she felt assured in her own mind that God had already saved her, or decreed to do so.

"Ah!" said I; "I am afraid this minister, as you call him, a minister without any regular authority from God, has been wading out of his own depth as well as yours. We know nothing of God's decrees, except that we are sure he has decreed to save all true Christians; and we know nothing also from Scripture of any feelings which can assure us beforehand of our salvation, except we feel besides, that we believe, and love, and obey our Creator and Redeemer. If our heart condemn us not, then may we have confidence towards God, that he will accept our good intentions and our earnest endeavours to please him, and that he will save us for the sake of Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for all mankind. This is easy to understand; stick to this, and trust not to any other

feelings. The greatest sinners, continuing in their sins, have worked themselves up nevertheless to an imagination (but it was a vain imagination) that they were amongst the elect children of God, who must needs be saved under any circumstances; and then forsooth they became proud and arrogant, and neglected themselves, and despised their neighbours, and doomed them to destruction. Avoid and check these mistaken ungodly feelings to the utmost of your power; they will make you wicked, or turn your brain?"

"They have almost done it already," she answered, "whilst I have been trying to get them. But God help me! And you, Sir, I hope, will teach me, what I must do to be saved."

"Nothing is so easy as to teach you this most valuable of all knowledge," I replied; but the difficulty will come afterwards, when you are to practise what you have been taught. Yet a person with sincere intentions may overcome every difficulty; because God himself will assist the natural weakness of such a person with a sufficient portion of his own strength. I have spoken to you already about public worship; and I cannot advise you too often, to be constant and regular in your attendance at the parish-church; not to run with itching ears after strange preachers; not to gape after new-fangled methods of salvation; but to walk onwards, quietly and steadily, in those excellent paths, which are as old as the Gospel itself; remembering always, that he who doeth righteousness is righteous, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. You must therefore repent heartily of the past; you must make new and better resolves for the future; and to put yourself in the way of obtaining God's grace to enable you to keep those resolves, you must pray to him continually, and you must worship him in all his ordinances. Have you ever received the Holy Sacrament of Christ's body and blood?"

"Never, Sir," she said, "I am so unworthy; I should not dare to do it."

"We are all unworthy," I replied; "and it is very proper that we should think so; for God loves, and Christ preaches, humbleness of mind. But you need not fear to come to the holy table, if you really are determined to renounce your sins, and to pursue piety and virtue. The holy table indeed is the best place for making such determinations, and for binding you to the fulfilment of them, and for obtaining strength to perform all your duties. But what will become of your own family? Will *they* help you, or hinder you in this new course of living? Your husband, for instance? What is he?"

"Alack! Sir," she answered; "he is a poor ignorant hard-working creature. He slaves to get his bread, and maintain his family; and he seldom goes to the ale-house. But he never prays to God, and most likely never thinks of him; and if I ever try, as I have

done of late, to turn his mind that way, he hardly seems to understand me; and does not say a word himself; and gets off to something else; so that, I think, he would be the first to jeer me, if I were to become a church-goer. When I went to the Chapel the other day, he called me Methodist, and other vexatious names; and, Sir, he curses and swears in a most terrible manner for nothing, or next to nothing. Then, Sir, he is as deaf as a post, and cannot read a letter."

"This is all very much to be lamented, good woman," I said: "and undoubtedly you will have great difficulties to contend with, and great trials to go through. But the greater your trials and difficulties here, the greater will be your reward hereafter, if you conquer them all; and if Christ strengthen you, you may do every thing. But now tell me about your children."

"Ah! Sir, she replied; "it is a pitiful story to tell. They have got a bad name in the parish: and indeed I cannot deny but that they are very wild, and drunken, and will set themselves to no regular business. A cart and a horse to do little jobs with; and dusting, and bone-gathering, is what they chiefly trust to; and this takes them into mischief in many ways, and is altogether an idle vagabond sort of life; but they like it, and will do nothing else; and God knows how they who are married support their families! Indeed, Sir, you may see their poor children running about half-naked, and always without shoes or stockings."

"Are any of them old enough to come to school?" I asked, "No, Sir," she answered; they are not." "Have you any of your own," I asked again; "who are not too old for such a purpose?" "My youngest lad," she said, is just eleven years old." "Oh! then," I rejoined eagerly, "send him immediately to my school; perhaps, with God's help, we may be able to teach him something good, and may give him a desire to take a different course from that which his brothers have so unfortunately taken. And then also he will come to Church every Sunday, and you may come with him; which will make the thing more easy to you, and less observed, till your habits are fixed, and scorn and opposition no longer deter you from your duty."

"Alack-a-day! Sir," she replied; "he gets six shillings a week, young as he is; and we should be put to sad shifts without his earnings. I pick up a few pence, when I am well, by these bobbins; but bread is so dear, and fuel, and other necessary things, that we can but just make both ends meet without troubling the parish."

"Then," said I, "you are resolved, it seems, to let this boy grow up as the rest, in the worst employments, and in the worst company, rather than pinch yourself a little, to give him a chance of learning to read and write, and to distinguish good from evil, and to love and fear God. I am perfectly sure, that you know very well your-

self, that, if he be suffered to proceed as he now does, he will be taught to lie, to cheat, to steal, to drink, to swear, and many other bad things, which I do not like to name; and he will be a thorn in your own side, and a new load of guilt upon your conscience to weigh you down to the very grave. Is not all this, I ask you, the natural and usual course of circumstances? Have you any reason to expect that your case will turn out otherwise?"

Mrs. Barton fetched a deep sigh, and fixed her eyes upon the ground, and answered nothing. She was convinced, no doubt; but she could not relinquish so easily the little comforts which six shillings a week might purchase. However, at length she raised herself, and said, that she would talk to her husband about it; which I understood too well to mean, that nothing good would be done. Hereupon I took my leave; just reminding her of the several heads of the advice which I had given her, and expressing my hope that her present sorrow was sincere, and would be improved into a real repentance and amendment of life. Then I added, that I should look anxiously for the boy at school, and for herself at church.

Sunday and Monday passed; Mrs. Barton was not at church, nor the boy at school. They passed again with the same result. I called; she was reported to be quite well, and gone out. A few days afterwards I nearly met her in her own street, but upon seeing me she went hastily into a neighbour's house with a manifest wish to avoid me. In another week, when she had nearly met me again, she crossed over to the other side of the way, and pretended not to observe me. After a little while, however, she ventured to pass me on the same side of the way, though without looking at me, and not giving me a convenient opportunity of speaking to her. At length all sense of shame and compunction seemed to be worn off; she looked me in the face, and treated me as a perfect stranger; not even dropping the slightest curtesy as she went by me. It would not be easy to account for this in a satisfactory manner; but it was evident that she had relapsed into her former habits; and probably she now regarded the whole of her conduct, in sending for me and talking with me, as a weakness to be buried in utter oblivion.

For the present I suffered things to remain in this state; having indeed from the very beginning despaired of doing any good, when I saw so many objections started to every scheme of amendment which I proposed. Winter, however, came on, and with extraordinary severity. Work failed; distress ensued amongst the labouring families; and the most profligate were the most importunate for parochial relief. The young Bartons, with less pretence than others were more clamorous; and never omitted to apply when the committee sat, and often besides in the intermediate days. On these occasions I became acquainted with the greater part of them; and one night a man of a very remarkable figure presenting himself be-

fore us, I could not wait to hear his story, but inquired at once who he was, and was answered that it was old Barton, the father. Once seen, such a personage was never to be forgotten. He was a complete specimen of a gipsy from the retired lanes and woods of Buckinghamshire; and his long residence here had produced no material alteration in the generic characters of the race. He wore a smock-frock which encompassed him all around, and which was plentifully besmeared with grease and mud. His hair hung over his ears, and face, and down to his shoulders, in long straight lank black locks, and his eyes were scarcely visible peeping between them. He held his hat in both his hands before him, and stood bolt-upright without uttering a syllable, or even appearing to have the power to speak. However having been questioned by the nearest person, whom he could not hear without bawling, he at length explained his wants, and was dismissed with a moderate relief. I then inquired his character, and found, besides what his wife had told me of him, that he was a notorious thief, though appearing to be the most stupid of men. No circumstances during the winter brought me into nearer contact with this wretched family; but I did not fail from my seat at the board, to admonish the sons, as to the irregularity of their lives; which, however, only brought upon me in return a surly, or abusive answer.

In the spring Mrs. Barton sent for me again. I went; and without giving me a moment to talk to her, she conducted me into a small back-room, like a wash-house, where I saw, lying on a bed without curtains, a young woman, evidently in the last stage of a consumption. The walls of the chamber were damp, and green. The poor sick person herself was coughing, and spitting blood. When a moment of ease came, she did not sink back upon the pillow, but laid her head sideways upon the edge of the bedstead, and closed her eyes. Her cheeks were tinged with a flush of red, occasioned by the exertion.

After contemplating this piteous object for a few minutes, 'till all was quiet, I asked who the poor sufferer was. "She is my daughter," said Mrs. Barton. "Is she married?" I asked again. "No, Sir," she answered; "more's the pity! but it signifies little now—she is going, and she has one less to sorrow after her." This speech was very pathetic, but of dubious meaning. I guessed, however, that the young woman had been delivered of a child born out of the sacred pale of wedlock. The next sentence confirmed my suspicion. "She has been unfortunate, Sir," said Mrs. Barton; and would no doubt have proceeded to tell me all her history; but at this moment the sick daughter opened her eyes, as if to expostulate with her mother, for unnecessarily exposing her shame; and I immediately went close to the side of the bed, and, in a tone of sym-

pathy, inquired of her how long she had been ill. The answer was, "Two months, Sir." "And have you been here," I said, "the whole of that time?" "Not the whole," she replied; "but it will be six weeks to-morrow, if I live till then." "God alone," said I, "knows how long you will live: whether for one day, or two days, or many; but we all of us know this, that God will not take you, until he has tried all his mercies upon you. This sickness has been long, and I dare say, at times very painful; but it is a great mercy, and a clear proof of God's love for your soul, which he wishes by every method to save. But, my poor creature, why did not you send for *me* sooner, to help you in your troubles, and to perform my office of reconciling you to God through Jesus Christ?"

Here the mother interposed, and said, "I will tell you the truth, Sir, and no lie. My daughter has been wishing day after day, to see you; but she was now and then so much better, that I thought she would recover, and that we need not trouble you to come so far. And indeed, Sir, I am ashamed myself to see your face, and have put it off the longer on that account. I have seen you pass the house twenty times; and twice or thrice I was ready to start up to call you; but my heart failed me, 'till there was no more time to lose. Ah! Sir, you gave me some good advice; if I had followed it, things might have been better now."

She wept—I comforted her; but at the same time, lest I might administer a false comfort, I probed the wound to the bottom. "Good woman," I said, "God gives you another opportunity of hearing my advice. He forces it upon you; so great is his goodness! And if your tears are tears of penitence for yourself; not worldly tears for worldly things; for the loss of credit; for the imprisonment of two of your sons; for the threatening sickness of this daughter, who now lies stretched in pain before your eyes; your tears will be dear to God, and he will accept them, and note them down in his book to be remembered for ever. But we will talk of *that* another time, with God's leave; your daughter requires all our attention first."

So I turned again towards the daughter. Her face was bathed in tears as well as her mother's, and the whole scene was a very trying one. Without doubt she felt for her brothers, who were sent to prison on a charge of robbery; and she was touched to the quick with a sense of the disgrace which she herself had brought upon her family; but, I believe, her tears flowed from a deeper source, and betokened her earnest desire of pardon and forgiveness at the hand of God. To help this feeling therefore, I said, "Let us all compose ourselves for a short time with reading and prayer. You would wish me (would you not?) to pray for you?" "I have long wished it," she replied; and may God hear you! I am a great sinner—I know

it too well; and I see now the end of it in this world, although so young. But the next world; the next world; what is to become of me there?" Her sentence was broken with sobs, and coughing succeeded. Her mother supported her in her arms, and as she hung over her, bedewed her with fresh tears.

By this time I had found a Prayer-Book, and was on my knees; and when the coughing ceased, I said, "I will read you the humble confession and prayer of one of the greatest penitents whom the world ever saw, King David; and I will read it slowly, that you may understand and feel every sentence and apply it to yourself, and join in it from your heart; which if you do, I tell you confidently, that God will pity and forgive *you*, as he did *him*." She clasped her hands, and waited in silence, whilst I turned to the fifty-first Psalm. Her whole manner demonstrated sincerity.

I read the three first verses, and then paused for an instant. She had accompanied me with her lips, and still continued to utter something, although inaudibly. When her lips were motionless, I read four verses more, beginning with the ninth; and then I paused again, to give her time for reflection and application to herself. She went on for a short time repeating something as before. Again I resumed my reading, and went through the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 13th, 15th, 16th, and 17th verses; some of which being pronounced, as the subject of them required, with rather an elevated and exulting tone, after the former ones of deep dejection and humble supplication, her spirits were evidently cheered, and a glimmering of hope kindled in her breast. She seemed perfectly to understand the whole, and therefore, for fear of weakening the effect, I did not attempt to explain, or enlarge upon, any thing. But the Prayer-Book, out of which I had read the Psalm, being prefixed to the Bible, I turned to the seventh chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, and rose from my knees, and said, "I will now read you a beautiful story out of the New Testament, that you may see more clearly and certainly, what a mighty power the broken and contrite spirit has with God, through the intercession of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ."

She bowed her head at the sacred name of *him*, before whom hereafter every knee shall bow, either in holy adoration, or in hopeless despair. I rejoiced to have thus discovered that she knew him, and I secretly prayed for time to make her acquainted with the all-sufficiency of his merits to atone for the sins of the whole race of mankind.

However, standing by the bed-side (for there was no chair at liberty) I began at the 26th verse, and read to the end of the chapter; intermixing a few explanations and remarks, as I went on applicable to her own case. For instance, "the Pharisees," I said, "were proud of their good deeds, or of what they thought to be good deeds:

and fancied themselves God's especial favourites; and despised and condemned all others, as wicked and reprobates, who lived in a different manner from themselves. But no deed is good enough in God's sight to claim a reward of *him*. In all we do we fall short, in some way or other; the very best of us fall short of true goodness. We must therefore humble ourselves before God, instead of boasting of any merit that we might seem to have; and we must look to the merits of Christ, and plead *them* only in our behalf. Such is the disposition that God and Christ love; and such are the persons whom Christ was sent to seek and to save. These self-sufficient Pharisees therefore did not profit by him, because they imagined that they did not want him. The sick only call for the great Physician of souls; but *they* vainly thought themselves whole, and so they rejected him with scorn. The very harlots went into the kingdom of God, but *they* would not believe or receive him, and so they died in their sins. When I had finished the chapter, she said, "Oh! that I could hear those blessed words, 'Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven!' then I should be happy, indeed, and wish God to take me. But the sins of that poor woman could never have been so great as mine; nor am I, I fear, so penitent as she was."—"Pray to God, then," I replied, "to make you so; and as to the greatness of her sins, no doubt they were very great; but it is not necessary to know how great they were, nor to compare our own with hers. God has nothing to do with much or little in such a case; but, at all events, they that love him much, will be forgiven much. This is the Gospel, and these, I hope, are glad tidings to you."—"Glad indeed," she said; "and I will think of nothing else; and I will try to love my Maker and my Redeemer, that they may love *me* in return, and save my soul."

In this propitious frame of mind, I left her for the present, having first kneeled again, and repeated the Lord's Prayer, and the first prayer in the office for the visitation of the sick, and the benediction at the end. As I got up to take leave of her, and went out of the room, she eagerly besought me to call again soon, and to pray for her in the Church. I promised to do so, and hurried away, being late, and not now disposed to talk with the mother.

The next morning I returned to this interesting scene of action. In the interval I had learned that my poor patient had begun life with very good auspices; having been taken early into the service of a kind mistress, who had taught her to read and write, and had sent her also to Church. There was indeed manifestly about her a degree of decency far beyond the rest of her family, derived from those first impressions and habits, and which no subsequent habits had effaced. Here I saw the benefit of the knowledge, and the principles which had been instilled into her by her mistress. Circumstances had for a time triumphed over them; but those circum-

stances being now entirely changed, the knowledge and the principles had free scope to act, and were in their turn predominant. The name of Jesus was not new to her, as it was to many whom I was summoned to visit on their death-beds. She knew to whom the sinner in general might fly for pardon, although she did not seem to know the whole extent of the mercy of the Gospel, and thought perhaps that she herself might be excluded from it. Upon being told, therefore, that God's mercy through Christ was bounded by no limits, and perfectly universal, she was prepared and stimulated to love much, with the hope of having much forgiven. Nor was it necessary that I should now teach her the great principles of right and wrong, in order that she might examine and scrutinize her actions, with the view to a thorough repentance; a long sickness, and the approach of death, having torn asunder the veil which licentious passion had thrown over such actions, she now saw them in all their deformity and wickedness, as they had been long ago described to her in the days of her former innocence; conscience had regained its just influence, and stung her thoughts with a severe retribution of anguish; and she was herself more inclined to exaggerate, than to extenuate, every sin or folly, of which she had been guilty.

But to go back to her history. Whilst in the service above mentioned, she attracted the attentions of a young man in a superior rank to her own, who seduced her, and then deserted her, and left her pregnant. Necessity compelled her to quit her place. Having saved something, she did not come home to her parents, but retired to an obscure lodging, where she was delivered of a little girl. By degrees her money was exhausted, and her character being lost, she listened to the proposals of a second lover, with whom she lived as his wife, though not married to him, until he saw that she was likely to have a family; and then he abandoned her. At this moment in great distress, she came to the desperate resolution of throwing herself upon the neighbouring town, and then step by step, she plunged deeper and deeper into all the vices accompanying such a life. These vices brought on the usual diseases, and the diseases terminated in consumption. Her two children, meanwhile, had been thrown into the workhouse, and she herself, now sinking under a mortal attack, was received by her parents without difficulty, and had come to end her days in the house where she was born.

Such was the outline of the mournful story which had been related to me, and of which I expected to make some use in my future conversations with this repentant prodigal. Arriving at the door, I was let in by Mrs. Barton, who told me that her daughter had just fallen asleep, but that she would go in and wake her; for she was sure, she said, that nothing would do her so much good as my prayers. "I will pray with her," I answered, "very willingly;

but she must not be disturbed by any means. She had perhaps no sleep in the night."—"It is very true," she answered; "and I think, Sir, she was not kept awake so much by her disorder, as by going over again and again the story which you read to her, and which struck her to the very heart. Indeed, Sir, she is a true penitent."

"I am glad to hear it," I replied, looking round for a vacant chair; "and I will wait a little to see whether she will wake of her own accord." Upon this Mrs. Barton reached me a chair; having first unloaded it of the numberless things that were crowded upon it, and having made it as clean as she could. I sat down, and said, "it is a long time, Mrs. Barton, since I talked with you on your own affairs, and at your own desire. You confessed, yesterday, that I had given you some good advice, and you seemed to regret that you had not followed it. Pray what prevented you?" "Ah, Sir," she answered, "I am ashamed to think of it. But many things prevented it, which needed not if I had been of the right spirit. My poor lad was very unwilling to go to school, and I did not correct him as I ought to have done; and now it is all over; for he has left us, and shifts for himself. We let them all do as they liked, and now you see what it has brought them to. They tell me that I shall never want, whilst they can get any thing; but they will never hear any of my warnings, and I fear they will bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." She wiped away a tear, and then proceeded. "I might have come to Church, I know, Sir; for that was in my own power, whilst the Lord gave me strength to walk; but sometimes I had not a decent thing to stand up in, being forced to pawn my best clothes: and now of late the cry against my children has been so great, that I am glad to hide my face within doors. And there I have no comfort. My old man is cross, and abuses me for every thing that goes wrong; and now this poor girl is dying under my eyes, who ought to have been the staff of my old age." Here she wept again, and I was prepared to speak, but the sound of coughing in the next room caught my attention. "It is my daughter," said Mrs. Barton; "she is awake, and I will go in, and get her ready to see you, Sir."

She did so, and in a few minutes I was at the bed-side, and inquired of my patient, if her sleep had been comfortable. "It was short, Sir, she said, "but very comfortable. I was not scared by any terrible dreams, which used to happen before. But indeed my mind is now more at ease than it was. I fear I shall presume too much. Yet if I think of my past life, it is enough to humble me. Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me!" Thus did she frequently ejaculate whilst I was with her.

"How gracious," said I, "has God been to you! Foolish unthinking men might say, that it is a grievous thing to be afflicted with so long and so painful a sickness. But you will have the wisdom and the gratitude to say with King David, 'it is good for

me that I have been afflicted,' for it has brought me back to the knowledge and the belief of my God and Saviour. If you had been cut down in the midst of your sins, in riot and sensuality, with foolish or impious mirth upon your tongue, where would have been your soul?" A shade of horror darted over her pallid countenance, and her mother sobbed aloud. "But," I continued, "it pleased God to spare you, that he might bring you to repentance; to chastise your body with disease and pain, that he might heal your distempered mind. Thus is he severe for the purposes of mercy; not because he hates you, but because he loves you. But I will read you the two exhortations to the sick, where all this and much more is better said."

I now read them, stopping at the sentence which calls upon the sick persons to examine, and accuse, and condemn themselves, that they may not be accused and condemned in the fearful judgment of the last day. I always pause here, as if to give those whom I address some moments for reflection; and the pause generally leads to useful conversation. In the present case, my humble patient, who had listened attentively throughout the whole, and in particular passages had clasped her hands with fervour, and invoked earnestly the sacred names which are mighty to save, now said, "Yes, Sir, I do accuse and condemn myself, without seeking for any excuses for my wickedness. But God knows whether I feel my wickedness as much as I ought. To examine myself is a dreadful thing; but I try to do it, and will not willingly spare myself any pain."

"You are very right," I replied;" and I would have you call every single sin to remembrance, if it be possible, that you may leave none unrepented of to rise up against you hereafter, when you stand at Christ's tribunal. And lest your memory should be treacherous, pray as David did, 'O my God, cleanse thou me from my secret faults;' purge away the guilt of all those numberless sins, which their very multitude has caused me to forget, or which I committed without noticing at the time, or which in my ignorance I did not consider to be sins; cleanse me from them all, as if I repented of them separately, with the blood of that immaculate Lamb, which was shed to wash away the sins of the whole world. Let your repentance be of this kind, and I promise you, in the words of the Prophet Isaiah, that, although 'your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they have been red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' " "Oh! that it might be as you say," she replied eagerly; "but, Sir, you have caused me new fears, and new reasons for humility and grief. I see now that my sins, which I never think of, may be more in number than the very hairs of my head, and quite impossible to be reckoned up. Will God indeed be so merciful as to forgive me all these, if I put them

thus together, and ask him to pardon the whole number at once, without my particularly recollecting any one of them?" "Be assured that he will," I answered, "if you deal with him sincerely, and not in hypocrisy. And it may happen, if he should prolong your life, so as to enable you to read more of his word, and to understand how pure, and holy, and severe it is, your mind may be opened, and a new light may break in upon you; and then you may bring to the bar of conscience a thousand actions, which passed before unnoticed, and to which you imputed no sin, but which at length you now see to be exceeding sinful. Thus will your repentance become daily more complete, and more effectual to *him*, who died for you."

"Ah! Sir," she said, "if God should give me a longer life, and still more, if he should restore me to health, I might repent better, in the way that you teach me, and by leading a new life. But God knows best, and my own heart may deceive me. The wretched things, which I once thought pleasures, are now odious to me in the remembrance; and I am quite astonished that I could ever have loved them; but God knows what might happen. New circumstances may produce new desires; misfortunes and want might overpower all my resolutions; and how could I rise again from so dreadful and disgraceful a fall! Therefore God's will be done! Let *him* dispose of me as may seem best to himself. But whilst he suffers me to live, I will repent, and I will study his word, to repent better daily."

These were truly Christian sentiments; and wiser or nobler there could not be. The tears start into my eyes whilst I record them after the lapse of many a year. At the time they flowed profusely; nor was I able to answer a word. She who uttered these sentiments, was by birth of the meanest rank; her poverty was extreme; her body was wasted by disease; she was lying on an old uncurtained bed; a dirty tattered rug was suspended by nails between the bed and the door; the coverlet was patched, and yet ragged; no medicines, no cordials, were to be seen there, to procure a temporary sleep, to sustain the sinking frame, to rouse the broken spirits. A jug of barley water, standing on the hearth, by a fire that scarcely glimmered, was all there was, to moisten now and then her parched lips, but not to impart nourishment or strength.

Take physic, pomp! Visit these scenes of mourning, ye sons and daughters of riot! and ye will learn to estimate the vanity of your pleasures and your pride!

These were the external appearances; yet was there not to be heard, or seen, one single murmur of discontent, one single impatient word or look; all was submission and peaceful resignation to the will of God, as being most just, and wise, and good! Am I not right in saying, that the sentiments uttered in this hovel were noble

and exalted? Worthy of the loftiest palace, of the most elevated rank, or mind? As I have mentioned already, I could not reply; so I knelt down, and remembering how appropriate that divine prayer would be, which stands next to the absolution, I opened to it, and repeated it; interrupted indeed by frequent chokings, but in some way or other I repeated it; and I saw that every petition went to her heart. The Lord's Prayer also having been read, and the benediction of St. Paul, I rose, touched her hand, and withdrew with speed, to indulge alone a sympathy, which I could not control.

On the following day I visited her again. Some money which I had given to her mother had been well laid out for her benefit. She had now oranges by her bed-side, and some fruits of our own country, which were very grateful and refreshing to her palate; and Mrs. Warton had sent her some currant-jelly, which was pleasant to her lips and throat, as well as nourishing to her whole frame. But she was sinking, as it appeared, hastily to the grave; and, as her mother told me, before I entered the sick room, she had during the last night been rather bewildered in her mind; so that I thought it proper to lose no time in administering the sacrament to her, which she was both fit, and I was confident would be most happy, to receive at my hands.

Immediately on my entering the sick room, she looked at me with a ray of gratitude beaming through her deadly pale countenance, and said, "I owe all these comforts to your goodness, Sir; and much more than what is to be seen; I mean trust in God through Jesus Christ, and hope of pardon. I do not know how to thank you, as I ought; but if I were worthy to pray to God for *you*, and all your family, to bless *you* and yours in every thing, I would do it from my heart. I do it indeed, and will continue do it."

My answer was, that I should be rewarded over and above, for the discharge of my duty, if I saw her depart in peace with her God, and with herself; and "I am come now," I said, "to do perhaps some better thing for you, than I have yet been able to do. I am come to offer you the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of your Saviour." Here I paused, for her face was disturbed with a sort of convulsive motion, and a few tears started from her eyes. I could not interpret her feelings, but the sequel did; and they were honourable to her. Recovering a little, she exclaimed, "Ah! Sir, I remember in former days, when I first went to the table of our Lord, with my good mistress, who had taught me all about it, how resolved I was to walk in the paths of virtue during my whole life. The kneeling at the rail to eat the bread and drink the wine, made me tremble to think what I was doing; and I felt too sure that I

could never afterwards be guilty of any wickedness. But by degrees I forgot to pray to God to keep me upright, and my own strength was too little to preserve me from stumbling and falling; so I fell very low indeed, and have been pointed at by the finger of scorn. Will God suffer me to touch the bread and wine again? Will he not make it poison to me, instead of health, either to my mind, or body? If I might presume, a poor sinner, just beginning to see and feel the error of my ways; if I might venture to eat and drink such holy fearful things, after all that has passed; if *you* think I *may*, Sir, I shall be happy indeed, and am ready now." Her face was convulsed again, and fresh tears of penitence again issued forth. Her mother covered her eyes with both her hands, to hide her distress. I was myself deeply touched with this proof of her humility, and I thought in my own mind, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God!" There was also in the chamber, one of her sisters-in-law, a tall stout woman with hard features, who seemed little likely to be moved with any expression of fine Christian feeling; but I saw a tear on her cheek; and I was glad that she was there, and hoped that the scene might contribute to her spiritual welfare. Her husband was one of the sons of Mrs. Barton now in prison, but expected to be released in a few days; and I thought it would be well, before his return, to pre-occupy her mind, if possible, with some good principles which might be turned to account in the management of her family.

Having observed for a moment the groupe before me, and having collected my own spirits, I said, "I have no doubt whatever but that your partaking of the Lord's Supper, under your present circumstances, and with your present sentiments, will be a service well-pleasing to God; but that you may judge better for yourself, I will read you the invitation addressed to the communicants in our Common-prayer." This being done, I continued; "You see here, that you are invited to draw near with faith, and to take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort, if you are satisfied in your mind with respect to three points; of which the first is, that you do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins. I am sure that I need not question you in this particular. I have had every proof of your sorrow for your sins, and of your abhorrence of them, that I could expect, or wish. The next point is, that you are in love and charity with your neighbours. And let me remind you that by your neighbours is meant all those who have been thrown into your way in the concerns of life; not those only, who have lived next door to you, or in the same street, parish, or town. Tell me then, have you so subdued your feelings with respect to persons, who may have injured you even in the highest degree, that you now think of them only with the spirit of Christian love and charity? Can you now bless *them*, who have been a curse to *you*? Can you now pray for

them, who have used you spitefully; and for *them*, who seduced you into the paths of wickedness, and, but for God's mercy, left you to perish in them, both body and soul, to all eternity?"

She was greatly agitated by this solemn appeal, and hesitated how to answer me. I watched the movements of her countenance, and I fancied that her thoughts dwelt painfully upon some wicked persons, whom she could not yet bring herself to pardon. Before she was able to speak I proceeded thus: "To pardon those who have injured us, in all cases, may require the very utmost extent and perfection of Christian charity; and if we could arrive at it, then we should be like God himself, and Jesus Christ; and we might approach them with the greater boldness. Christ, you know, prayed for his very murderers; and, what is more, whilst they were in the act of nailing him to the cross. God forgives every day his greatest enemies, who blaspheme his name, and scorn his mercies; he showers benefits upon them, all the common benefits of nature, and benefits intended for their especial use, to bring them to repentance. He might destroy them at a single blow; but he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked; he would have all men to be saved, and therefore he sent his beloved Son to die for them. This is the pattern then after which we should copy. But in truth, the injuries that we receive from one another, are comparatively of so petty a nature in general, that we might well forgive them, without such a pattern before us, and without having been assured, that we shall only be forgiven ourselves, in proportion as we forgive our fellow-creatures. Indeed, if the injury endangers our immortal soul, it may reasonably cost us a severe pang to banish all feeling of bitterness against those who inflicted it. Before we can bring ourselves to so noble and divine a temper, it may reasonably cost us much study of that beautiful pattern, and much struggling to bend our own reluctant wills to the will of God. But we must try to do it; and by God's help we *may* do it; and then we shall be the more fit to dwell amongst the peaceful blessed spirits of heaven."

I paused. The various emotions by which she had been disturbed had now somewhat subsided, and she said, "Ah! Sir, there are things which I think I can forgive; which I hope I *have* forgiven; but I fear I never can forget them. They are too deeply graven in my memory; I cannot root them out. Ought I, Sir, to forget them as well as to forgive them? And does God require this?" "Certainly not," I answered. "In the great work of self-examination you *must* retrace the incidents of your life; and whilst you preserve the reason, which God has given you, you cannot but perceive what share others may have had in the sins which you have committed. These things *must* spring up in your thoughts, whether you will or not; but if they should create revengeful feel-

ings, you must check those feelings perpetually, until you have subdued them; in short, until you can remember, and yet forgive."

"Oh, Sir," she replied, "God forbid, that I should try to shift any blame from myself upon another! But I was once innocent of great offences, and a treacherous man (I cannot but call him so, Sir,) robbed me of that bright jewel; he seduced, he betrayed, he deserted me; he deserted me, when I was about to make him a father; and, when left alone, I must needs be reduced to a more sensible disgrace, and a deeper misery. He had rifled my best treasure, the only thing for which he cared. I confess my angry passions were roused against that man; passions unknown to me before; and in my great distress I besought heaven to punish him. I heaped curses upon his head." The image of the transaction seemed to pass before her eyes, as if it had just occurred; and it gave a vehemence to her voice and manner, which exceeded her feeble exhausted strength. I interposed therefore, and desired that she would calm herself, and not endeavour to renew these bitter recollections, which agitated her so much; and I added, "I am sure you have repented of them."

"I have indeed, Sir," she said; "but I did even worse than this. God forgive me! My betrayer went to sea; the ship was wrecked; he perished in the waters. Not a moment was spared him to say, God have mercy on me! And where did he go thus suddenly, thus unprepared? Ah! Sir, I can pity him now that I know the value of a soul; but I did not pity him then. Heaven, I thought, had heard, and granted my prayers; and in my blindness and wickedness I blessed the God of heaven. But I see now how different my conduct and thoughts should have been in that moment of triumph, as I foolishly conceived it to be. God however has been gracious and merciful to *me*, in giving me time to reflect, and in forcing me to do it by long and heavy afflictions; so that I have learnt to be merciful to every other wretched sinner; and I wish now from my heart that I could obtain forgiveness even for *him*, who was my ruin. If we pray for the dead, Sir, will God hear us?"

"Certainly," I answered, "there is no sin in praying for the dead; but at the same time it cannot be of any use to the dead themselves. As the tree falls, so it lies. Whatever was our state with respect to God at the moment of our departure hence, the same will it be at the dreadful day of judgment. Nothing subsequently done can make a change in that state. But the prayer, which is not granted, being offered up with a sincere and contrite spirit, may return with a blessing into your own bosom; and at all events such a prayer will prove, in *your* case, that you have forgiven, or are striving to forgive, those whom to forgive is most difficult; those whom you could not forgive, without drinking deeply of the fountain of Chris-

tian charity. Are there any other persons, whose recollection preys upon your spirits, and disturbs that tranquillity of mind, with which you should prepare for the Sacrament, and still more for the last awful act of death?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied; "but since I have opened my inmost thoughts to *you*, this very hour, and have been instructed and counselled, and comforted, by your conversation; I am sensible that I am become a different creature; and I think I can say without any fear of mistaking my sentiments, that every spark of the unchristian spirit of revenge is quenched and dead within me. Yet there is another, Sir, almost as guilty as the former, and more cruel towards *me*, who still lives; who knows into what distress I am plunged through *him*; who leaves me to my wretched fate, although much and often entreated to help me; who refuses to come near me even to receive my forgiveness; who denies that he is the father of my child, and so turned it adrift on the wide world to perish in want and perhaps in sin. Ah! my poor dear children! Fatherless ye are already: orphans ye will be soon! your mother will quit you not many days hence!"

Here she was overwhelmed by a complication of sorrows, and could utter no more. Her mother and sister-in-law, both in tears, supported her, whilst she coughed with such extreme violence as to be in danger of an immediate dissolution. I observed that she threw up great quantities of blood. The interval however was favourable to myself, as it gave me leisure to compose my spirits, and to consider in what manner I might best endeavour to console her.

A calm being at length restored, I said, "it is very natural that you should be anxious for the welfare of your children; and you seem to leave them certainly in a very unprotected and friendless condition. But how many have been brought safely on their way by God's kind and watchful Providence; when they had neither shoes, nor scrip, nor staff! And your poor destitute children have acquired a peculiar claim to his fostering care. To such he has made an especial promise, that he himself will be their Father. Can any thing be more beautiful; more cheering and refreshing to the afflicted spirit; more adapted to alleviate the pang of the departing parent; than those expressions of Scripture, that he is the Father of the fatherless; that in him the fatherless find mercy; that he will judge the cause of the poor and fatherless; and when he says himself, leave thy fatherless children to *me*; I will preserve them alive. Reflect on these gracious declarations, and they cannot but be sweet and consolatory to your heart. Your children, you see, will not be desolate and abandoned. They will lose indeed a weak earthly parent; but they will gain an Almighty Parent in heaven."

She raised her eyes, and clasped her hands, and seemed to pray

with fervency, that God might indeed be the preserver and guide of her children, and take them into his own safe and holy keeping; and, "what," she said, "could I have expected but sin and evil, if they had been left under the roof of those, who ought indeed to have sheltered them, because they gave them being, but who would have brought them up, as I know too well, neither in the fear of God nor in the belief of their Saviour. We come therefore always to the same end, that God knows best, and does all for our own good. His will be done! But I hope, Sir, when they are ripe for it, you will take my poor children into your school, and let them be taught their religion; and to worship God. I was taught these things, and I went astray; but I feel the benefit of them now, when it might have been too late to learn them. Ah! Sir, how many persons have I known, even in my short course of wickedness, who have died without the faith of Christ, and without the fear of God, with curses on their lips and horror in their hearts!"

"It is too painful," I said, "even to think upon; but we will endeavour at least to rescue your poor children from such a fate. As a matter of course, being in the poor-house, they will be sent to school, till they are able to do something for themselves; and they will be taught their duties to God and their fellow-creatures. I wish all were as anxious about it, as you now are." Then turning to her sister-in-law I seized upon the opportunity afforded me, of reminding her that she had one son now of the fit age for instruction, and I besought her to send him to the school. "You see," I said, "what is the opinion of your afflicted sister: and she is in a state to make her opinions most worthy of attention. She is now able to discern what has been most useful to her of all the circumstances of her present life; namely, that alone which did something to prepare her for the next. And she perceives now that the next life is every thing to her, and this life nothing. We are too blind to perceive it; but let us trust *her*, and be guided by her. Besides, if you have any regard for your own comfort in this world, and for your everlasting state in the world to come; you will do what you can to give your children good principles; for, if not, they will be a constant sting to you here, and they will be the first to accuse you hereafter."

Mrs. Barton, the mother, shuddered at the recollection of her own negligence in this particular, and joined with her sick daughter in pressing the younger Mrs. Barton to listen to my advice, which she professed to be very willing to do; but at present, she said, they were all at sixes and sevens, her husband being in prison and every thing going wrong. "However, Sir," she added, "he will be at home to-morrow, thank the Lord! And I hope his troubles will make him a better man; and if *you*, Sir, would be so kind as to speak a word to him, it might do much good."

"I shall consider it to be my duty to do so," I replied; "but I will tell you what I think may be much more useful. He will come without doubt to visit his poor sister here; all her brothers, I presume, will come; and if God would but give you strength to speak to them about the courses which they have taken," I said, turning to the sick woman herself, "*you* might prevail when I could not. They will be quite sure that you are sincere in what you say, and they will see how deeply interested you are for the salvation of their souls. They might suspect the parson as only speaking in the way of his trade, and not really caring what becomes of them; but, God knows, I should rejoice greatly to hear that they reformed their lives, and turned out new men. Can you undertake this Christian, this sisterly office; and thus endeavour to impress upon your brothers, that there is no real substantial pleasure, but in having good reason to think, that God will pardon them for Christ's sake; and that if they proceed in their former habits he will be a consuming fire to destroy them?"

"I had already thought of doing so, Sir," she answered immediately; "and now you recommend it, I will certainly do it, if God spare my life and give me an opportunity. Besides, you know, Sir, if I could but succeed, it might please God to accept it of me, as a good work, in this my helpless condition, when I seem unable to do him any service at all." "Yes, indeed," I said, "it will be so, whether you succeed to the extent of your wishes or not. And if there be any other persons, not of your own family, with whom you have been closely acquainted, and who are still pursuing the broad way to destruction both of body and soul, if by speaking or writing to them, you could awaken them to a sense of their danger, and induce them to break off their sins, this no doubt would be an act well-pleasing to God, and a most excellent use of the time, which may be yet allotted to you in this world. In general the sick and the dying can only practise what are called the passive virtues, the virtues of meekness, and patience, and contentment, and resignation; and very difficult are they to practise, and very lovely to behold, both for God and man; and they are what your blessed Saviour practised before you. But you may go beyond this, and be actively good, and in some sense undo a part at least of the evil which you have occasioned by your example, by making it known to your former companions in vice, that you now abhor it, and that you have learnt, fatally by your own experience, that the wages of sin is death, and that there is no peace to the wicked, but in renouncing their errors, and turning from Satan to God.

As I spoke thus, her countenance seemed to be faintly illumined, like an evening-cloud by the last beam of the parting sun. It was a little glimmering of joy, which sprung from the idea, that she

might yet do some good in her generation, and attest thus more effectually the sincerity of her own repentance. After enjoying this thought for a few moments she exclaimed, "Ah! Sir, how shall I be able to do all this, lying here on my sick-bed, my hand scarcely firm enough to guide the pen, my understanding at times confused and wandering? However, I will pray to God to help me, and to send his Holy Spirit, to put the proper thoughts into my head, and to teach me the most proper words, that I may convince and persuade those to whom I speak or write, not to delay so long as I have done the difficult and painful task of repentance."

"Do so," I said; "and God will both give you strength, and afterwards accept your works, as if they were all your own; and cheer yourself with this Scripture, that they who convert a single sinner from the error of his ways, shall shine as the stars for ever. And now, (for I see you are exhausted by this long conversation) I shall take my leave for the present, and will return in the afternoon with every thing necessary for the Sacrament. With regard to the third point of self-examination, whether the communicants intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways, I am perfectly satisfied. You have given me every test of it that can be given in your situation; and I am sure, where deeds are absolutely impossible, our gracious God will accept the will in their stead. I have therefore now only to ask who are prepared to communicate with you; the rules of our Church require two persons." "Let *me* be one, Sir, if you please," said old Mrs. Barton; "I know I am not worthy; but God perhaps will make me more so; and it would be a comfort to *me*, and my daughter too, to receive the Sacrament together." Tears accompanied this speech, and there was every air of sincerity about it; so I admitted her at once; only observing, that she had already heard from my lips, what was the nature of the responsibility, which she took upon herself, by eating Christ's body, and drinking his blood; and expressing my anxious wish, that, by complying with Christ's ordinance, she might hereafter be a partaker of all the benefits of his death. Then turning to the young Mrs. Barton, I inquired what were her intentions. She declined the rite immediately, as I supposed she would, and as indeed I wished she might; being convinced that she did not understand the meaning of it, and that probably she would reap no advantage from it in her present state. I said, however, that I hoped she would soon know more about her religion, and then perhaps the reasons which she now assigned for declining the Sacrament, namely, the troubles of her family, would be the very reasons to urge her to have recourse to the holy table of her Lord for comfort, for consolation and for strength. Thus, there being but one in the family to communicate with the sick woman, I said, there was a poor young

girl, a very near neighbour, who had been long ill, but was now so much better as to be capable of being brought out without danger; and that I had prepared her for the Sacrament; and that I knew she would be very glad to take advantage of such an opportunity; so the hour being fixed, and every other arrangement made, I took my leave, desiring that my patient should be kept quiet and undisturbed till my return. Having called upon the young girl immediately afterwards, I mentioned the appointment to her, which she readily promised to keep; telling me that she would get a neighbour to wheel her there in a little child's chair which she had often used.

At the hour agreed upon we assembled in the sick chamber. It had been cleaned out, and every thing superfluous was removed. By the side of the bed stood a small table, on which I spread the napkin, out of my Sacrament-basket, and afterwards the rest of its contents. The wine was in a small bottle, with a piece of leather tied over the cork; the bread was wrapped up in white paper; and there were a glass and plate to receive them for the ceremony. A pillow was placed by the side of the table for myself to kneel upon; Mrs. Barton and the young girl knelt at the foot of the bed; the sick person was in an elevated posture, supported on all sides by the bed-clothes, but still apparently faint and wearied, as if the labour and hurry of the preparation had been too much for her feeble frame and spirits. She had probably been lifted from the bed, whilst the bed itself was re-arranged, and her own linen had been changed.

On the whole things were much more decent than could have been expected; and the preparation of mind in my poor patient, discovering itself in every feature, was as perfect as could be wished. During the administration of the solemn rite she gave a thousand tokens of devotion; and especially, when she received the bread and wine, her ejaculations were fervent, and manifestly came from the heart. Again and again she exclaimed, "Christ Jesus, have mercy upon me! O my blessed Redeemer, save my soul! Reconcile me, I beseech thee, to my Heavenly Father!" Her piety, and the whole of her conduct affected us deeply. The old mother and the young girl wept and sobbed. I myself was frequently interrupted by my feelings; and when the ceremony was over, without making a single observation, I went away in tears.

It so happened, from a variety of circumstances, that I did not visit the cottage again for two days. Immediately upon entering the sick-room I perceived, that a lamentable alteration had taken place: and that the sufferings of the poor woman were heavier and more uninterrupted. Her respiration was difficult and more painful than ever. Her senses however were perfect, and she was still

able to speak, though not very plainly, nor many words at a time. Upon first seeing me she said nothing; but her lips quivered, and her face was slightly convulsed. I did not know, whether she meant to reproach me for my seeming neglect of her; or whether, conscious of her own change for the worse, she thought that it would give me pain to perceive it. Her hand was lying on the bed-clothes; I took it into mine, and said, "I am truly sorry not to have been able to see you these two last days, and now to find you in so great distress." "Ah! Sir," exclaimed her mother, "if it might please God to take her!" "No," I interrupted her, "we must wait his own good time. He is wiser than *us*, and knows best when it will be fit to release her. He may have determined to try her patience to the utmost for *our* advantage, and for hers; to wean her entirely from this world, and to qualify her for a richer reward in the next. I would scarcely venture therefore to pray to God to release her. By my own folly, if my prayer were granted, I might deprive her of a nobler crown proportioned to her sufferings. And what saith St. Paul? The time of this affliction is but for a moment in comparison with eternity; and the very heaviest affliction is light in comparison with the exceeding weight of bliss and glory which may be purchased with it. I would only pray, therefore, that God would enable her to bear her sufferings, as she does now, with so calm and serene a patience."

Here the sick person, evidently comforted by my observations, herself interposed, and said, with difficulty, "I am content to bear whatever God may lay upon me; blessed be his name! My pains are great; but he upholds me, and does not suffer my faith to fail. And my sins, no doubt, require all this and more to purge them away. But pray for me, Sir, if you please, for I can yet listen, and join with you. And may God bless you for all your goodness, and for the wonderful help which you have given me in my trial of adversity!" This was spoken with many intervening pauses; but her character was strikingly raised as her strength declined, and her troubles increased; by her gratitude to myself I was extremely touched.

I made no direct reply to what she had said, but kneeling down, opened my Prayer-Book in the Psalms, and continued reading therein for about half an hour; she remaining the whole time with closed eyes, and clasped hands, in fixed attention, and now and then repeating a verse after me. After every verse indeed I regularly stopped for an instant or two, to give her the opportunity of reflection, and of repeating the verse, if she was inclined to do so; and also for my own convenience. For my manner was to read those verses only which suited the case before me, and therefore it was sometimes necessary to run over several with my eye, before I came to one that was applicable; and the regular pause prevented the appearance of searching. I also substituted new words of my own

here and there, to bring a sentiment or supplication more home to the bosom and feelings of my patient. This will be found to be a useful practice in most cases; but especially when the sick person has been visited very often, and all the prayers in the appointed office have been read again and again. And I may here observe, that the private manuals of prayers for the visitation of the sick, admirable as some of them are, do not appear to answer their purpose amongst the poor. In general they are not short enough; not sufficiently plain and intelligible; not in the same rhythm and cadence with our authorized prayers; and whenever I attempted to use them, I fancied that they produced little or no effect. But in the Psalms I always found an inexhaustible store of materials, and a slight alteration of single words adapts them to every variety of affliction and understanding.

On the present occasion I began with the sixth, of which very nearly the whole was suitable. In the seventh verse I omitted the last clause, and the concluding verse I omitted altogether; and I made a few verbal alterations in various parts. Then passing to the seventh Psalm, I pronounced only the first clause of the first verse, and went from thence to the eighth Psalm, of which I read the first, fourth, and fifth verses only. In the ninth Psalm I took the first, second, ninth, tenth, and eighteenth verses, being careful always to adapt the tone of my voice to the sentiment, and to pause rather longer between verses of which the sentiments were dissimilar. Thus then, after employing half an hour, I concluded with the prayer for the sick when there appeareth small hope of recovery, the Lord's Prayer, and the benediction. She continued in private prayer for a minute or two after I had finished, and then opening her eyes, and unclasping her hands, she said, "I am quite unable, Sir, to talk to you, or to thank you, with this shortness of breath. Pray, good mother, tell Dr. Warton, before he goes away, what happened here the day before yesterday." "She shall tell me, then," I replied, "in the front room. A little repose and quiet will now be good for yourself." So I gently pressed her hand and left her.

Old Mrs. Barton, having waited to change her daughter's posture in the bed, soon came to me, and communicated all that I was anxious to hear; but not without often wiping her eyes, and often stopping to compose her mind. The story indeed was very affecting, and highly to her daughter's praise. The brothers, it seems, had been discharged from prison, and had come, as we supposed they would, to see their dying sister. Others of the family were also present. She herself, after receiving the sacrament, by which her spirits had been wonderfully comforted and elevated, had enjoyed a good night's rest for a person so situated, and found herself the next morning, as she thought, more refreshed and more strong

than she had been for many days; and thus she was enabled, by God's kind providence, to go through the task which she had undertaken.

As well as I could put things together from the mother's account, she must have addressed her brothers in a manner somewhat like the following; they themselves, it appeared, being generally silent, only assenting to her words by their look, or a single yes, and by no means attempting to argue with her, or to contradict her. "Look at *me*," she said, "William and Richard, and the rest of my brothers! Look at *me*! I have been wasting away, you see, by slow degrees, and I shall soon be no more in this world. I may die at any hour, with *my* disorder; I shall certainly die in a few days. You have the best reason, therefore, for believing all that I may say; the dying seldom speak falsely. And, you know well, I am not an old person, brought to the brink of the grave by length of years, and the usual infirmities of age; I am neither deaf, nor blind, nor is my understanding, what God gave me, at all decayed; so that I am not like one who is past all the pleasures of this life, and who would not surprise you, if she said that she cared no more about them. No! I am at the very age for every thing that the foolish world calls enjoyment and pleasure; but I now loathe it all. What good did it ever do me, that which I have seen of it? The evil of it you perceive with your own eyes. It has brought me to an untimely end. It has cut me short in my days, like the flower of the field. But what good did it do me at the time? Laughter, and the song, and the dance, lit up my face, and lifted my spirits to the sky; but it was all false and empty joy; it had nothing solid or lasting about it; in a few hours it was gone. Nay, even whilst it seemed to continue, care was often secretly gnawing the heart. Would this then have been a fit exchange for my soul? The soul is born to live for ever in happiness, or misery; and if I could have lived a hundred years in these pleasures, without one single care to dash them, would that be a sufficient recompense to my soul for endless years to be spent in misery? No! no! the soul is beyond all value; and to secure the everlasting happiness of the soul, nothing can be too painful, or too terrible to undergo, whilst we are here. Hunger, and thirst, and cold, and nakedness, and pain, and all the evils of the most abject poverty in this world, which we so eagerly shun, are quite contemptible, are nothing, if we could but once arrive at Heaven. We should then look back upon the worst calamities and sufferings that this world could bring, with an utter disregard and scorn, and we should wonder that we ever troubled and vexed ourselves about them. We should perceive how little space they took up in our whole existence, and how completely they were swallowed up and lost in eternity. Eternity never ends! Think of this but for a moment; and you will know at once, that

every thing else, set in the scale against it, must be as light as a feather. Nothing, in short, that we plague ourselves about, is of any good consequence, unless it brings us nearer to God and Heaven. Riches, or poverty; mirth, or sorrow; it matters not what comes, if it turns to our everlasting welfare. If all this be so then, and it cannot be denied; what can be said, my brothers, of your course of life? I ask, where will it lead you? To Heaven? Be sure not. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. To the bottomless pit of fire? I shudder when I name it. What must it be to be cast into it? But whither will your course of life lead you in this world? Is there any one part of it that deserves the name of pleasure? You may go to the alehouse, and drown your troublous thoughts in drunkenness; but is drunkenness itself a pleasure? Drunkenness, which is usually attended with quarrelling, and swearing, and fighting; or perhaps with lying, and cheating, and stealing, to supply the constant calls for drink? But if not, can it be a pleasure to lose your reason; to ruin your health; to be seen staggering through the streets; to be followed and hooted at by the children; perhaps to be put into the stocks; to find your families starving at home; your wives pawning their clothes to buy bread; your children shivering with nakedness; and then, at last, if not before, to be driven by desperation to unlawful courses, which end in the jail, or the whip, or an ignominious death. This is the usual progress of the drunkard, and he who finds pleasure in any step of it, must have a strange sense of pleasure. Ah! my brothers! it is to put yourselves below the level of men, and to rank with the brute beasts. God above too has strictly and awfully forbidden it; your own consciences within you cry out against it; it cannot therefore prosper here; it will be dreadfully punished hereafter. Oh! listen to the warning voice of your dying sister! Flee drunkenness, as you would flee a serpent; it has been the cause of all your other sins. But God yet spares you, that you may repent. Jesus Christ his Son invites you to pursue the paths of holiness. Obey *him* and *he* will save your souls in the terrible day of judgment."

This is all that I can now recollect to have heard from Mrs. Barton, as having been actually spoken by her daughter, and which, even in this imperfect form, I thought too good to be lost: but she must have spoken, no doubt, much more than this, and with much greater force, speaking as she did, in very short sentences, with perpetual questions, and fixing her brothers down to every point. They stood by her bed for an hour or upwards; and except the necessary pauses to regain her breath and strength, she was never silent for many minutes together. She ceased at last, from complete exhaustion. When Mrs. Barton had finished her story, "This," I said, "was very forcible preaching; the hand of death being almost visible, and ready to strike the preacher herself; how did your

sons bear it?" "Oh, Sir," she replied, "they cried over her like children, and though they made her no promises, yet I think it must do them good." "I wish it may do so," I rejoined; "and if it does not, whenever it comes into their thoughts, it will lash them with scorpions. But tell me was your husband present?" "Yes, Sir, he was," she answered, "but he was too deaf to hear much, and I fear he understood still less. He, however, shed tears because the rest did; and I will tell him all that I can remember at my leisure, and bid him consider that it was spoken by his dying daughter, whom he used to love the best of all his children." "You will do well to do so," I said; "and I heartily pray that God may bless these exertions of your penitent daughter to the improvement of you all, and to the salvation of her own soul as well as yours!" "God grant it," she answered fervently; "but I had almost forgotten to tell you, Sir, this was not all my daughter did on the same day. She wrote two letters besides, which however she did not show me; and to-day there has been a young woman here in consequence of one of those letters, and she was alone with my daughter for some time. What passed between them I do not know; but the stranger came out with red and swollen eyes, and I hope will be the better for it." "I hope so too," I said; "and at all events, I am sure that your poor daughter has done the best she can to atone for her faults. Properly speaking, indeed, nothing that we can do can atone for the very least of our faults; all *that* must be left to Christ, who alone is sufficient for it; but God requires these things of us, as the fruits of our faith, and the proofs of our sincerity. Your daughter has given these proofs to the very utmost of her power; and I think she will be sealed for one of God's children, and a joint-heir with Christ, against the day of redemption." "Bless you, Sir," she exclaimed aloud, "bless you again and again, for the comfort which you have given to my old heart!"

At this moment the younger Mrs. Barton rushed out of the sick room, and interrupted our conversation with the sad tidings, that our poor patient was seized with a fit, and apparently in the agonies of death. We followed her back into the chamber with hurried steps, and found her account to be too true. The dying woman was struggling for breath. I knelt down, and repeated the commendatory prayer; the rest supported her. She recovered for an instant, and became quite calm, and breathed gently. At length also she opened her eyes, and manifestly knew all around her; and she saw *me* upon my knees, and with a faint smile seemed to acknowledge the sacred duty that I was performing. I reached out my hand, and took hold of one of hers, and said, "The Lord Jesus receive thy spirit! Into his hands I commit it, as into the hands of a most merciful and a most mighty Saviour!" She pressed my hand,

and just moved her lips, and expired. If her tongue had not refused its office, she would have said, "Amen."

After rising upon my feet, and silently contemplating the corpse for a few minutes, I cried, "Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord!" And then turning to the weeping bystanders, I said, "Let us kneel again, and pray, not for *her*, who is now I trust amongst the blessed spirits, but for ourselves, that we may die the death of the righteous. This having been done, I rose once more, and hastily withdrew; revolving, as I walked homeward, the series of my ministerial labours, which, for once, had terminated, as I thought, so happily, and with God's blessing upon them.

After the funeral, at which the whole family were present, in a few days I set out to visit them; intending to enforce the serious reflections, which the late awful event was so calculated to suggest. Old Mrs. Barton, to whom I first went, was busily engaged in removing from her cottage. Going in, and being for a moment alone with her, I inquired the reason. "It was your own advice, Sir," she answered, "when I first saw you. But I will tell you the truth; my daughter, that is gone, advised me so too. 'Mother,' she said, 'you are getting into years; you cannot be long here; you should be thinking often and seriously, of that hereafter which is soon to come, and which will last for ever. This is an ill-suited place for such serious thoughts; disturbed by constant broils, to which peace and quiet are utter strangers. Every day you see and hear too much to shock and distract the mind of one preparing for eternity. Look out, when I am gone for some quiet decent cottage in the fields, and there abide till God shall call you to follow me. Oh! may we meet again in Heaven!' So she spoke, Sir, and I determined at the time to follow her counsel; and you see I am now doing it."

"I am glad of it," I replied; "and I hope also that you will do every thing else, which either I or your daughter have counselled, or which your afflictions, sent by God himself, have put into your head, as being right and good; and it was for the very purpose of saying this, that I now came to see you. But you are too busy to be able to talk calmly; I will go on to your son William. Am I likely to find him at home?" "He has just left me, Sir," she answered; "he has been helping me to move my things, and I expect him back soon." I hastened away, and knocked at his door. It was opened by the eldest boy, and I saw at once the whole family seated at dinner, round a small table; the two youngest on the laps of their father and mother, who were feeding them with potatoes, which, with some bread, seemed to be their only fare. The potatoes were in a large dish on the middle of the table; there was

no table cloth, and there was that appearance of wretchedness in every thing around, which was to be expected in the case of a man, who had six children, and was just returned from a jail.

As I entered, I took off my hat. Mrs. Barton, being an old acquaintance, rose from her seat with the child in her arms. He continued sitting with his hat on his head, but suspended his dinner to hear what I was about to say. "I intended," I said, "to have had a little talk with you, if I had found you at leisure; but I will not trouble you now, as you are at dinner. I will call another time." "Oh! it is no matter," replied William Barton; "you see what we have got; it will not spoil by waiting; but there is little enough for so many of us." "It seems so indeed," I answered. "Here take this," and I put a crown piece into his hand, "take this; and let your wife get some shins of beef, and a little bacon, and some leeks, and make you a good supper of hot savoury soup; and I warrant you your children will be very happy, and sleep well after it." On this he put the child from his lap on the floor, and rose up, and took off his hat, and said, "thank you, Sir." "Yes, William," said his wife, "and you must thank the Gentleman too for what he did for us, whilst you were away." "Well, I do then," he replied, thank you, Sir; thank you for all favours!"

Whilst this passed, I had an opportunity of observing him. He was very tall and rather thin. His hair was black, like old Barton's; and would have hung down, long and straight like his, if it had not been cropped. From his ears, however, to his mouth the hair and beard together had been suffered to grow, so as to form prodigious terrific whiskers; the whole of his throat was also thickly covered with black hair. His appearance was altogether very savage; but the features of his countenance, upon examination, did not correspond to his figure; and betokened nothing particularly ferocious. I knew, however, that when his passions were roused by drink, or any other cause, he would not hesitate to commit any crime. Against myself, it is probable that he was in some degree exasperated, as I had boldly reproved him, in the committee of relief, for his improper mode of life; and perhaps he attributed his imprisonment chiefly to my exertions in my office of Chairman of the Association for the prosecution of Felons. However, his wife, having received assistance from me during his absence, had now softened his feelings towards me, and my present well-timed bounty had apparently completed the conquest. But to keep him in better order by the expectation of future favours, I told him that I should always be happy to help him in his difficulties; and difficulties he *must* have sometimes with six children; and that from himself I neither expected nor wished any thing more, than that he should endeavour to justify my assistance of him, by sending his children to school, as they became old enough for it. and by getting

into some regular mode of industry for the maintenance of *them* and his wife. "But I will not interrupt you any longer now," I said; "so good bye to you all. I shall have other opportunities." However, no opportunities occurred immediately of pursuing the conversation into other important matters; but it appeared that he was conforming to my advice; the eldest boy came to school, and he himself hired his services to one of the farmers, who was disposed to encourage him by good wages. In my walks I sometimes met him, when he always acknowledged me by a bow; and he was generally considered to be much improved. At home, however, when I called at his house, things appeared to be very untidy and uncomfortable, and not such as to make a husband eager to come there rather than go to the alehouse. Nor was this altogether the fault of the wife. His wages, though good, were not sufficient to lodge, feed, and clothe eight people; and consequently she was obliged to go out daily to weed in the grounds, or to wash for the laundresses, or at private houses. Meanwhile the children were left to do as they liked, and became ragged; and all sorts of filth and dirt accumulated in the house. This might have been very easily avoided in the case of a small family; but, where there were many children, cleanliness, and good order, and comfort, seemed hopeless.

From William Barton I went to Richard; but he was not to be found; nor did I meet with him for a long time. Not being encumbered with such a family as his brother's, his cart had not been sold during his imprisonment, and having raised money enough to buy a donkey, he had returned to his old trade of dusting and boning; from which I prognosticated that he would soon relapse into his former habits of profligacy.

There were two other sons married and settled at a greater distance, whom I had never seen but at the funeral; and there were also three more, having no fixed places of abode, being unmarried, and lodging for a day here, and a day there, and never to be seen by *me* but by accident. They jobbed about as they could, and when out of work were ready for any mischief. I had no means of getting at them, but through their mother; and those means were, I believe, entirely useless. In point of fact, one of them absconded some time afterwards, in consequence of a burglary, in which he was concerned. The rest of the party were apprehended, tried, convicted, and transported beyond the seas. But one of the chief witnesses having died, young Barton, re-appeared in the parish, and being brought to trial was acquitted. But I am anticipating the course of events.

§ 2. RICHARD BARTON.

THINGS continued in the state described above for several months, when one night a woman appeared before the committee, who applied for relief for Richard Barton, stating that she was his wife. She was known by the name of Phœbe, and a member of the committee, acquainted with the circumstances, asked her where she was married; and then a discussion arising, she was compelled to confess, that she was not married at all. Upon this she was dismissed with a severe rebuke, and without any relief. Presently however Richard himself appearing, and it being clearly ascertained that he was ill, it was thought advisable to relieve him now, as he had been so often refused in former times, when he had not ill health to plead. The relief however being small, and his disorder having fallen into his leg, and being likely to be of long duration, Phœbe came to my house to petition me in his behalf, both that I might intercede with the committee, and that I might also assist them privately.

This Phœbe was a pretty, but a wicked woman. She had three children; and of the two last Richard Barton was the ostensible father; they having living together as man and wife for about three years, in which period those children were born. Having gone into the hall to speak to her, and having heard her story, I asked her how she could think of coming to the Parson in *her* circumstances, living with a man to whom she was not married. "Dear! Sir," she answered, "why I am as true to him, as if I had been to church with him; and so what does it signify?" "If you are really true to him, the people sadly belie you, Phœbe," I said. "So they do, Sir," she rejoined; "they will say any thing out of spite and malice." "But whom am I to believe?" I asked. "You know, Phœbe, that I cannot believe *you* any more, after the shameful falsehoods that you once told me about this, that, and the other; and falsehoods, which you must be certain, that I should detect in a few hours; so that you must have lied for the sake of lying, and almost with the intention of showing me that you had no regard for truth whatever. You never look into your Bible, or perhaps you might have read there, that the lying lip is but for a moment. The liar is sure to be found out, and then will never be believed afterwards."

"I confess, Sir," she answered, "that I did once tell you a lie, and that I was wrong in doing so; but it was a long while ago, and I was in the greatest distress; so I hope you will forget it, and what I now tell you is the very truth, and no lie." "So then," I said, "you think there is no harm in living unmarried with any

man, provided you keep to him alone." "I hope not," she answered; not speaking so positively as before. "Then you doubt about it, do you?" I inquired. "If so, I must tell you, that when you do a thing about which you doubt, whether it be right or wrong, you are guilty of sin, and liable to punishment at the hand of God. And I think you must at least have doubted about *this*; for why should it be the general custom for women to marry, unless there were some good reason for it? Are *you* wiser than all other people, so as to have found out what they never found out, that marriage was not worth a pin, and all nonsense? Ah! Phœbe, Phœbe, this is very bad."

She was abashed; but, as I clearly saw, not convinced; so I asked her, whether she would think it innocent and harmless to live with a married man, on the mere condition of being true to him. "No, Sir," she answered immediately; "I am not so bad as *that* however; *that* would be adultery, I know very well." "Aye," I said; "and adultery is very wicked indeed; is it not?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "it must be so. But I am free from *that*." "I am glad of it," I said; "but what do you think of fornication? Is not fornication a crime too? And has not God forbidden fornication as well as adultery?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "I believe he has; but *that* does not concern *me*." "Not concern *you*?" I asked, "Why, do not men and women commit fornication, when they live together without being married?" "I never understood it so, Sir," she answered; "if I had, I am sure I would not have consented to live with Richard Barton." "Oh, then," I said, "you think it to be fornication, perhaps, only when men and women go casually together; one man with any number of different women; and one woman with any number of different men; and not when a single man and a single woman keep steadily together in the same house." "That is what I mean exactly, Sir," she replied; "and *that* is all that I do." Upon this she resumed her unbashful look, and appeared rather to triumph, as if it were now decidedly ascertained that she stood on good firm ground.

"Well," I said, "I hope it *may* be all that *you* do; because there is a difference in crimes, and some are greater than others. But tell me, how long do you reckon that a man and woman should live together to escape the guilt of fornication?" This question puzzled her, and she hesitated how to answer; so I asked her, if she reckoned a week sufficient. "No, Sir," she said, "*that* I do not; nor a month neither." "So then," I rejoined, "for the first month the man and woman would be fornicators; or at least you would not know what to call them during that time; and you must wait to see how they behave afterwards, before you can find a proper name for them. This will never do, Phœbe. This system of yours is too loose and uncertain; and a pretty pass the world would soon come

to, if we were all to practise it. When men and women marry, they marry for life, do they not?" "Yes, Sir," she answered. "And can they separate when they like," I asked again, "and enter into other marriages at their pleasure?" "No, Sir," she replied; "I believe they might be punished, if they did." "Yes," I said, "they would be transported out of the kingdom, as being unfit to live in it, after attempting to bring such strange confusion into families. But you and Richard may separate when you please, and marry whom you please, without being punished for it; may you not?" She could not deny it. "So that," I continued, "as you have had one child by one man, and two children by Richard, you may go to a third, and have three children by *him*, and so on; and then, if you are tired at last of this roving system, you may marry for life, so far as the law is concerned. And is it possible that you can think all this right? Who is to take care of the children? Will each supposed father quietly keep those that were born in his house, whilst you were with him? And if he refuses to do it, and throws them upon the parish, what will become of you then? Will not the officers, very likely, get you sent to Bridewell, as a lewd wanton woman?" "I shall take care of *that*, Sir," she answered. "I and Richard have tried one another now for three years, and we suit very well, and have no wish to change. The first man did not suit; we quarrelled, and he beat me; so I ran away; and it was very lucky for me that I was not married to him."

"Aye, aye, Phœbe, I see what you are about," I said; "It is very clear to *me*, that if Richard should offend you, you would be off immediately to some other man, if you could find another man in the world to take and try you. And can you be so blind as not to see that this is as bad a system of fornication as can be, and what God has most awfully threatened in the Bible that he will punish hereafter with fire and brimstone?" "I hope I am not so wicked, Sir, as to be punished in that manner," she replied. "When I went to the other man, I intended to live with him as long as he or I lived; and I intend the same with Richard. If I had come to Richard, only to try him first, whether he suited me, and then to act accordingly, I should have been in the wrong, I dare say, though I know many women who do so." "And what do people call such women?" I asked. "And what do they call their children? Does any body scruple to give them the most disgraceful names, which I am ashamed to mention? And the poor children are in trouble about it all their lives, and are in perpetual fear of being pointed at as base born persons, and called bastards by every enemy. See what you are laying up for yourself, and for *them*. Indeed it is already come upon you. Richard is sick, and cannot work; the officers consider him to be a single man, and they relieve

him accordingly. You and the children must starve; or, if you apply for help in your own person, you acknowledge your children to be bastards, and you must expect to be treated as the other bad women are, who burden the parish with bastards. This is a sad business; and yet you say that your intention is to live with Richard as long as he or you live. Why then not marry? How can I possibly believe you? When your character is at stake; when you are in danger from the law of the land; when God threatens you with future judgments; when all these things are brought upon you by not marrying; will any body believe you when you say, that you never intend to desert Richard, as you deserted the other man?"

She held down her head and was silent; she was rather ashamed, as I thought, than unable to attempt to answer me. So I proceeded, "God made men and women superior to other animals; but you would degrade yourself down to a level with them; you would go and live with the men, like cats and dogs, and other brute beasts, cohabit with one another. Will God bless such unhallowed doings as these? It cannot be. No! If you would have *his* blessing, without which there can be no true happiness in this world or the next, you must come to his holy house and kneel before him; and make your solemn vows to fulfil, with *his* help, the various duties of a faithful wife; and join with the minister of Christ in imploring God's favour towards you, and then receive, through the minister's hands, the sacred pledge of union with your husband, the ring, I mean; and which, I perceive, you presume to wear, without any just right or title to it whatever; pretending to be married, because you know that all decent persons will scout you from their society, if they find that you are not."

Thus I was running on, but here she interrupted me, as if unable to bear these hard blows, and said she would willingly be married to Richard, and indeed had long wished it, but that they had always been too poor to pay the fees. "Oh! very well!" I answered. "Then you shall have that excuse no longer. I will be answerable for all the fees. When shall the banns be published?" "As soon as you please, Sir," she replied, "when Richard is able to come so far." "Remember then," I said, "on this condition, and on this alone, do I consent to help you in your distress. Take this (giving her money,) and go, and sin no more." Thus I dismissed her.

Things proceeded in this manner for some time. Phœbe came to me now and then for pecuniary aid, reporting that Richard was getting better, and that the marriage was fully agreed upon. Meanwhile, I had myself seen him several times crawling about with his sore leg, but never at home, nor in any situation in which it would have been convenient to enter into a serious conversation

with him. I did indeed sometimes stop persons in the streets and roads, when my chief business with them could be transacted in a few words, and nobody was passing to overhear me. If I met, for instance, a man or woman, who had been at Church the Sunday before, and was rarely to be seen there, I expressed my pleasure on the occasion, and my hopes of a future more regular attendance. Or, if a regular Church-goer had been absent, I showed that I was aware of it, and mentioned my fears that there might have been some sickness in the family. If I saw a man idle, I lamented that he was out of work; and if I saw another generally disposed to be idle, but then at work, I exhorted him to keep his place. To parents also, whether they sent their children regularly and decently to school, or not, it was a fruitful subject for a passing observation; and a thousand other cases may readily be imagined, in which the Clergyman of the Parish might do well to show that he takes an interest. He will offend some by his rebukes, or by his questions implying censure; but he will acquire authority, and extend the range of his usefulness. Offences of this kind must come, and in a large population very often, if the Clergyman does his duty. By avoiding such offences he may be popular, but comparatively he will do but little good; and none will be awed into better behaviour by the consciousness that his eye is upon them.

This being my practice then, nothing more effectual passed between myself and Richard during this interval. I expected his recovery, and marriage. After a time he ceased to apply to the committee for parochial relief, and Phœbe to *me* for private charity; and upon inquiry I found that *he* was got well, and that *she* was run off to another man. Early one morning, however, I was surprised with a visit from old Mrs. Barton. She herself had, I think, been gradually improving in many respects since her daughter's death, and her own removal from her former place of abode; but I did not yet thoroughly comprehend her character. With her sons she had no influence whatever, although by her own account they were always very kind to her. No doubt she had shared in, or winked at many of their enormities before; but now I believe she was sincere in her wishes that they might change their mode of life. But alas! their habits were too rooted to be overturned by *her* wishes, or by any remonstrances on *her* part; and the impressive, affecting admonitions of their dying sister were forgotten, or neglected. Even William, the eldest, and upon the whole the most decent, had quitted his regular place of work, and returned to his old courses; and the boy was withdrawn from school. The mother herself had never been yet to church with any sort of regularity; and as an excuse for her absence she pleaded the declining state of her health. It *was* declining certainly, but it did not appear to *me* to be so much impaired, as to justify the absenting herself from public worship.

She was not therefore upon the very best terms with me just at present.

However I went to see what she wanted with me. Upon reaching her she said, "I hope you will not take it amiss, Sir, that I am come to your house to beg a great favour of you." Deep dismay was in her countenance. "By no means," I answered; "what is it?" "Ah! Sir," she replied, "my poor son Richard, that was ill so long with a sore leg, and was thought to be well again, is seized with a pleurisy, and the doctor tells me that he will be a dead man in a day or two. God have mercy on his soul!" "Amen!" I said. "Would you have me visit him, or what?" "Yes Sir," she answered; "that is what *I* want, and what *he* wants too. Ignorant as he is, and wicked as he may have been, he knows that he has a soul to save, and he is dreadfully troubled about it. But will you be so kind, Sir? I would not send a message to you, Sir; but I determined to come myself to explain matters a little; because I was frightened lest you should refuse to come to such a place after all that has passed." This I did not now precisely understand; so I said, "if you mean that your poor son is a very great sinner, *that* will be the stronger reason with *me* for going to see him. He, whose minister I am, ate and drank and talked with the worst sinners; and forbade none to come to him. Indeed he made it his business to seek and to save those who were lost, lost, humanly speaking; lost, but for *him*. Shall the servant then refuse to do what his master did? The master too having done it of his own accord, and out of pure benevolence; the servant being bound to do it by his office, and encouraged by the promise of the noblest rewards, if he do it faithfully? Go home; and I will follow you with what speed I can. Did you ever hear of my having declined to visit the sick and dying, because they were wicked?" "No, Sir, in truth," she answered, "I never did. God bless you for it, and spare my son to repent, as my dear daughter did, under your teaching and comfortable doctrine!" "My doctrine is not mine," I said; "but the doctrine of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. The misfortune is, that the friends of the sick too often send for *me*, when it is so late that nothing can be done. I hope this may not be the case with your son. Hasten and prepare him for my coming." "I will go, Sir," she replied, as she took leave, "as fast my poor old limbs will carry me; and so she hobbled off with a brighter countenance.

It was the height of summer, and very hot. My patient was lodged in the same house with his brother William; he above, William with his wife and six children below; and it was necessary to pass through William's chamber to get at Richard's. The staircase was low, narrow, dark and winding; so that it demanded no small care or constant use to mount it with safety. The head was to be

stooped, and the body bent, and one hand at least firmly fastened to any thing that accidentally projected from either side. But to increase the difficulties, the stairs themselves were in a tumble-down condition; every step quaked under my feet; one step was half gone, leaving a wide gaping chasm, to the imminent hazard of a leg; and just in the angle where one might have expected to stand and breathe for a moment with freedom, there stood a large sack apparently full of potatoes. Nevertheless all was surmounted without damage, and I emerged into the sick room, the stench of which was overpowering. If I had been later, some of the disagreeable smells perhaps would have been cleared away; but I had followed the mother so quick as to give them no time for any extraordinary preparation. The chamber itself was small; the window was closed; a fire was burning with a pot or two smoking upon it, and the steam issuing into the chamber; in the corner opposite the door was the bed; on the left hand was a chest of drawers; and all about the floor were scattered the various utensils of a family in the lowest and most wretched poverty.

Upon entering I saw only the mother, and observing that the room was much too close at this season of the year for any person in any disorder, I advanced through it not without difficulty, and first opened the window; then turning round I beheld the sick man, whom the chest of drawers had hitherto concealed from my view. The sight was afflicting enough.

His complexion first arrested my notice. It was what, I believe, is called livid; a yellowish darkish blue: and it gave me the idea that mortification or putrefaction had already begun. His whole appearance indeed was such as the great painter has represented that of Lazarus to have been, when he came forth from the tomb, with his grave-clothes on, after having been dead four days. This poor man was wrapped up in blankets from his feet to his neck, his arms also being enclosed within them. He had been lifted from his bed into his present situation upon two chairs, where he was placed nearly upright, bolstered on all sides with pillows and rugs. His legs were stretched out before him, and his feet rested upon a stool. He could not lie in bed on either of his sides on account of the acuteness of the pain produced by such a posture. Nor could he lie upon his back without the danger of immediate suffocation. In his present posture he seemed to be in a state of perfect quietude; a quietude which sometimes precedes death, and which I supposed was about to happen now. Thinking therefore that there was nothing else to be done, I knelt at once upon the edge of the stool on which his feet were placed, and began commendatory prayer. But observing as I went along, that there was still some life and spirit in his eyes, which were fixed upon me; and that he coughed two or three times with a considerable degree of force; I changed my opin-

ion as to the extremity of the case, and proceeded to repeat the following prayer for persons troubled in mind or conscience. Not knowing however to what extent the sick man before me was so troubled, I made some alterations here and there that I might be sure to touch his circumstances, and that he might have the better chance of understanding me. I omitted, for instance, the first branch of the second sentence, and I connected the following branch of it with the first sentence in this manner—"Let not," I said, "let not thy wrath lie hard upon him, and trouble not his soul with any despair of thy goodness; thou, O merciful God, hast written thy holy word for our learning;" and so I went on to the end, only changing confidence for trust, and the enemy for the devil.

Being now clearly convinced that he was not dying, I rose from my knees with the intention of reading the exhortation, and looking more attentively at the other persons in the room, I espied Phœbe amongst them, but shrinking into a corner out of my sight, and evidently studious of concealment. What the mother meant now struck me; and for a few moments I was at a loss what course to take for the advantage of those who were assembled. At length, having reflected, I assumed a stern look, and said, "What? Are *you* come *here*, Phœbe, to disturb the last hours of this dying man, with your crocodile tears, and your other wicked wiles, and your false comforts, which the poor afflicted sinner cannot listen to without the danger of everlasting ruin?" My tone of severity made them all tremble; the woman herself seemed to feel the least; so I proceeded in a still more cutting strain. "Where have you left your third man? Your hundredth, more likely? Husbands, I suppose, you will hardly call them, or be foolish enough to think that any body will take *you* for a wife. But where is your last man? Are you tired of *him* too; or did *he* send you hither?" Not so much abashed as might have been expected, she answered; "I have been no where, Sir; it is a false story that you have heard from beginning to end; I know nothing of any other man." No doubt but that Richard and Phœbe had hitherto mutually upheld each other in the lies, which were for their mutual profit, or seemed to be so; and she might have thought that it was for Richard's profit, to uphold her now. Judge then what must have been her surprise, her rage, her terror; when her old abettor, now under different circumstances, and on the verge of another world, threw off the mask; and collecting a strength, which did not seem to belong to him, (he seemed indeed to be speechless before) burst forth, in a hollow, loud, indignant voice, into this positive and harsh denial of her words—"Thou liar! I caught thee with Thomas Atkins! I saw thee with these eyes of mine! You were in bed together! is this a time for lying, Phœbe? The whole street knows it; and I—I—I am a dying man!"

Overpowered by his own dreadful energy, he stopped; and his

head sunk upon his breast. I was glad that he had thus done homage to truth; and I approved in my own mind of the course which I had taken, and hoped to be able to prepare him the better for another world. Meanwhile Phœbe, struck at first to the ground by shame and guilt, and then weeping and sobbing with a mixture of grief and passion; but not daring to reply, at length slunk out of the room, before I had determined what to say to her. Thus released from thinking about it, I turned to the man himself, and said, "See how this wicked woman would have you to go on lying or abetting lies to the very last gasp, so as to make you a fit companion in the next world for none but the devil himself and the rest of the evil spirits. The devil was a liar from the beginning; he is the father of all lies; and when he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, and what is natural to him. What can be more just therefore than that all men who are liars and fond of lying, should go to *him* at the last? To God they cannot go. God is a God of truth, and cannot lie; and therefore he loves the truth, and all who speak it; and he tells us, therefore in the Bible, with a most terrible certainty, that every liar being odious and abominable in his sight shall be cast out from his presence into the lake that burneth for ever with fire and brimstone."

These assertions came home to the poor man's conscience, and he began to show some evident signs of fear and trembling; and he looked up to me, but with half-raised eyes, and with a piteous countenance, as if he would have said, if he had known how to do it properly, "Oh give me some comfort, Sir, if you can; the thought of the next world is too horrible for me to bear." Whilst I was exploring his wounds therefore to the bottom, I determined to throw in a little balm; and so I continued thus. "Richard, you have done well in refusing to bear that woman out in her lies any longer. Your eyes are now, I trust, beginning to be opened; and God, if you pray to him, will help you forward in your repentance, of which you have just given the first proof. For true repentance is not sorrow only, but a change of actions, desires, and thoughts. In your present state there is but little, God knows! which you can do. One right thing you *have* done. You have reproved the liar; and I hope God will give you an opportunity before you die to do other right things. If you have done any body an injury, and have it in your power to repair it, do not rest till you have made amends; and if you can do nothing else, send somebody to ask forgiveness for you. If any body has done *you* an injury, let them know that you forgive them; for God will never forgive *you*, unless *you* forgive others. This must be one part of your preparation for the next life. And remember what I heard that your poor dying sister said to you, as to the foolishness of all your sinful pleasures when you stand with one foot on the edge of the grave, and look back

upon them. Was it not true what she said to you? What are they worth *now*? When you think *now* about your drinking and your gambling and other worse things, have you any pleasure in thinking also that you have made God your enemy and brought your soul into danger of hell-fire? For it is not the liar only, but the drunkard also and the fornicator, that God threatens to shut out from heaven for ever. Those indeed are the things which have brought *you* by God's command to your present state. But this is nothing in comparison with what they might bring you to in a future state. Have you not good reason then to hate them? Is it possible, if God were to spare your life, that you could any more desire such things? Can you bear to think of them even, without being full of anger against yourself for once loving them, like a brute; instead of loving, like a man, and a Christian, the true pleasures of industry and sobriety and purity and honesty and piety, which God loves also, and which he has promised to reward, for Christ's sake, beyond every thing that we are able to hope, or imagine? Try then your thoughts and desires in this manner; and, if you feel as I have described, you may be sure that you are repenting as you ought to do; but if not, you must throw yourself upon God's mercy and pray to God without ceasing for his divine grace to enable you to understand and to feel and to do what will be acceptable to him through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Have you prayed to God at all since your sickness?"

"As well as I could," he answered; "but I am no scholar, Sir." "Can you read?" I asked again. "No indeed, I cannot;" he replied. "Well," I said, "it is no matter now; for you could not do it, if you had been taught ever so much, when you were a child. But somebody must read to you, when you are able to attend to it. Here is your mother; she will not desert you, I know. Take this little book, Mrs. Barton; it is a short, plain good sermon; (one of Mayow's which I had printed for distribution amongst the poor) read it to your poor son, bit by bit, so as not to tire him; it will teach him a great deal, short as it is. But," turning again to the sick man, I said, "you must try to pray yourself and from your heart. It requires no scholarship to do this. It only requires that you should feel your wants, and then your wants would teach you how to pray; and if you felt your wants very deeply, then you would pray with the more feeling and the greater sincerity and earnestness. If you wanted me to give you money for the support of your half-famished children now that you are unable to work for them yourself; if you wanted me to give you a little wine to support your weak sinking body, would you not know how to ask me for them? But what are wine and money to a wretched sinner who is going to meet his God? He wants penitence; he wants pardon; he wants faith and trust in his blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is every thing to him; this only can save him from eternal

damnation. It would be strange therefore, if he felt his want, and yet should say that he did not know how to pray to God to supply it. Do you understand me, Richard?" "Yes, Sir," he answered; "and I will do the best I can; I can do no more." "And may God accept it!" I said. "Farewell now; if *he* please I will see you again to-morrow—*you* and *I* are both in his hand."

As I quitted the room I beckoned to the old mother to follow me below. What I had said to her son had greatly affected her; and before I could speak, she heaped blessings upon me for the pains which I had taken. When she stopped, I explained to her, what were the particulars in the sermon, which I wished her most to attend to; and I desired her besides, to read to him, if she had an opportunity, the 15th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel.

This being settled, I next consulted her about temporals; and having given her some money, which was more immediately necessary, and also directed her to send to the rectory for some medicines, and other things; we fell into talk about Phœbe. "What is to become," I said, "of this wretched creature? Will *she* go back to your son, after what has passed? Or will *he* receive her?" "Dear! Sir," she answered; "what can he do in his condition without her? Nobody would wonder, if he should die before night. Then there is my old man at home that wants *me* to do for him; and I am too much broken myself to take care of my son. I have not strength enough to sit up, or even to turn him in his bed; and to move him from his bed to the chairs, and from the chairs to his bed again, requires them all together, Phœbe, and William and his wife, and the rest of his brothers too. And here are three children; what is to be done with *them*? If Phœbe is turned out, will she take them with her? Or if their father will not part with them, who is to look after them? And Phœbe, Sir, is in a family-way again, six months gone. Was ever any thing so unlucky?" "Was she willing," I asked, "to do the household-work, and attend to the poor children, and nurse Richard, whilst she was here?" "Oh, yes, Sir," she replied, "very willing; and she is a stout woman too; and though so far gone, she can bear a deal of labour. "Well," I said, "in this great distress and difficulty, if she were really penitent for her wickedness, and wished to make some amends for it, by labouring for the dying man, when he can no longer labour for *her*, his children, or himself; if she would now be content to suffer any sort of trouble and pain in nursing him by day and by night, when she can no longer hope to get any thing from him; then something might be said in favour of her remaining here. But will not her presence hinder his prayers, and thereby lessen the possibility of his salvation? You heard what a dreadful lie she told, enough to make one's hair stand on end, but a short time ago. Or do you think, on the contrary, that your son is so far awakened

to his own situation, that he might do *her* some good, by warning her to leave the courses which have brought *him* to the very brink of the pit of destruction? If this were probable we might not be wrong in winking at her stay."

Mrs. Barton eagerly caught at this little twig, which held out the prospect of a great convenience. She had always been too apt to choose the smooth and broad way, though dubious where it might end, rather than the rough and narrow one, which led through trouble and difficulty to distant good. She did so now, but with more plausibility than on some former occasions. "Ah! Sir," she said; "I think it will be so; and you see, Sir, that my poor son will no longer endure her to lie; and if she should attempt any other wickedness, for the same reason he will not bear it; so that being checked she must get better by being with him now. And, as for Phœbe herself, Sir, I believe she told that lie, for fear, if she confessed the truth, you might order her away; and so she would lose the chance of recovering a little character by slaving for him on his death-bed. Besides, Sir, if we turn her out, she must go to the hedges and hovels; for nobody will take her in."

This speech was rather jesuitical; but well knowing, that any other scheme, which I might propose, would not be accepted, I made the best that I could of this; so I answered, "Let it be done then; but remember; the condition of her stay is, that she gives signs of true penitence, and of a real desire to practise the virtues, that are to be learnt in a sick room; for the sake of her own improvement, and in order to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, which God may accept through Jesus Christ. Tell her this continually, and let the sound of it be always in her ears." "It shall, Sir," she said; and so we parted.

As I pursued my walk I reflected upon the case of this Richard Barton; and I feared that his ignorance was so great, as to make it impossible to give him a competent idea of the Christian dispensation. His ignorance however was by no means so great as that of many others, whom I had been called upon to visit in their last moments. To some the very name of Jesus Christ was utterly unknown; of salvation itself they knew nothing; they did not comprehend the meaning of the term. This seems incredible. I will relate a fact, the truth of which I can vouch.

A lady of rank and wealth being just settled in the parish, and anxious to do some good amongst the poor people, went into a cottage, and entered into conversation with the woman who lived in it. After talking much about her temporal matters she came at length to spiritual; and having discovered that this woman never thought of public worship at all, she asked her what hope she had of salvation. But getting no satisfactory answer to this question, she next asked her, who was the person whom God had sent into

the world to save it. "Eve, I believe," said the woman. The lady lifted up her hands in astonishment, and being quite at a loss how to instruct people in religion with whom she had no ideas in common, and no ground to stand upon, she relinquished the task to *me*; and directed her benevolence into other channels.

In the course of my ministerial labours I have met with the same degree of ignorance in persons of a very advanced age; once in a woman of fourscore years; who told me also, that she had never considered the Church as intended for any but the rich; nor could I, whilst her health continued, persuade her to come there. Afterwards sickness made it impossible. The ignorance of Richard Barton was not of this kind, or degree; and he was alarmed about his destiny in the next world; with respect to which many of the uneducated poor are quite careless even in the moment of death. With Richard, therefore, there was a tangible point, of great interest to him, from which to set out. And he knew moreover, that Jesus Christ was the Saviour; at least in this sense, that Jesus Christ, in some way or other, could save and deliver wicked men from damnation, if he would. But what was the nature of Christ himself; what was the history of his abode upon earth; in what manner, or by what scheme of wisdom, power, and goodness, he was to save sinners; and what kind of faith or trust was to be reposed in him; with respect to all these Richard's mind was as yet a perfect blank.

Besides, he had not the faculty of speaking to the purpose, or of putting questions for information, like his sister. He had passed his whole life with the very refuse and scum of mankind. No language was so intelligible to him as that of oaths and execrations, or the cant phrases of thieves and vagabonds. No idea was familiar to him beyond the daily petty frauds of his ostensible employments. To pilfer and to drink, to drink and to pilfer, occupied all his thoughts in a never-ending round. His sister was very different. In the pursuit of her sinful practices she had always been thrown into the society of persons above her; from whom she had not learnt morality indeed, but she had caught a certain degree of civility and knowledge, which, with her original education in her mistress's family, had raised her in the scale of intellect and behaviour; so that she was never at a loss how to apply to herself whatever I might have said which was pertinent to her case; or even to extract from me my opinions as to points about which she was desirous of information. Richard, on the other hand, was likely to be quite passive; and how then could it be ascertained, without extreme difficulty and abundance of time, what he did, and what he did not, understand?

On the following day I found him in the same situation as at my first visit, and apparently in the same dying state. He had not been in bed since I saw him. I asked him how he did. "As bad as I

can be," was his answer. "Yes," I said, "you may think so; because you have never been so bad before; but God only knows; and he will also do what seems to himself to be fit. And as we can never know beforehand what it may be God's intention to do with us, whether to take us away immediately, or to leave us here a little longer, the wise man will always be prepared to meet him; and the sinner, when he comes to himself, will make all the haste in his power to obtain pardon; lest he should be overtaken, and cut off, before he has done it; the consequence of which must be that he will be cast into hell."

Whilst I said this, the sick man looked at me wistfully; but made no remark. I therefore proceeded. "You say, you are as bad as can be. Are you then preparing, as a person in such a state might be expected to do, to appear before the great Judge, who is acquainted with all your actions; with every word that you have spoken; with every thought that has been in your mind? We men know very few of these things; but God knows them all; and there is nothing, the most secret, that you can hide from *him*. And moreover he will call you to a strict account for every thing that has been wrong, unless you repent of it before you die. Are you, I say then, truly and seriously engaged in this the most important of all business at all times, but more especially on the bed of death; looking back upon every circumstance of your past life; accusing and condemning yourself for every sin; resolving, if God should spare your life, never to do the like again; and praying him to give you a new mind, and in fact to make you a new creature? Is this what you are about?" I waited for an answer; and the answer was the same as yesterday, that he was doing the best he could, and that he could do no more.

Again I proceeded. "If you are indeed doing the best that you can, God gives you in his Bible the greatest and noblest encouragements. Hear what he says—'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.' He says again—'Repent; and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.' Again, 'saith the Lord God, why will ye die? I have no pleasure in the death of *him* that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart, and a new spirit.' But God sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to preach this most comfortable doctrine, in such delightful stories, or parables, as they are called, that the broken-hearted sinner, applying them to his own case, cannot but be refreshed in spirit, and lifted up from the dust, and healed in his conscience, and taught to look up to heaven with faith and hope."

Then turning to the mother I inquired if she had read to her son

the chapter of St. Luke which I had prescribed. She answered that she had. "And did you understand it, Richard, so as to profit by it?" I said, addressing myself again to the sick man. "No, Sir, no!" he replied, "not enough; I was in pain, and I am no scholar." "Now then," I continued, "that God is so gracious as to give you a little ease from your pain, I will endeavour to explain those parables to you. Suppose that you were a man in health; and that you had earned ten half-crown-pieces by your labour; and that by some accident in the dusk of the evening you had dropped one in your chamber, and lost it; is a half-crown-piece of such value to you, that you would care at all for the loss of it?" "Aye, that I should," said Richard: "and sorely too, even for a shilling; a half-crown-piece is a great thing to such a poor man as me." "Then, I presume," said I, "you would spare no pains in trying to find it again." "No, *that* I would not," he replied, with more animation than I thought him capable of in his present condition. "You would perhaps light a candle," I said; "and search diligently under all the chairs, tables, and beds, and about the fender; and if there were any chink in the floor, you would pry closely into it. And if all this were not successful, you would no doubt also take the broom into your hands, and sweep out carefully every dusty hole and corner in the room, or on the staircase; and in short you would not rest a moment in peace and quiet, until you had recovered it." "Indeed I would not," he replied. "Well then," I continued: "suppose now that your search was at length rewarded, and that you had gotten the lost half-crown-piece once more safe again with the rest in your pocket; should you be glad in your mind, and make merry with your children about it?" "It is like enough I should," said he. "Very well;" I proceeded. "Now mark what Jesus Christ tells us about God, *his* Father, and the merciful Father of us all. Every sinner is to *him*, what the lost piece of money would be to *you*; something that he would wish very much to recover. Not that any sinner is of any consequence to *him*, like the money is to *you*; but that God is so kind and gracious, that for the sinner's own sake, he would not have a single soul lost; he would have every soul to be saved. Is not this an encouraging thing for sinners to hear? Does it not touch your heart? Will you not love such a God?"

The sick man muttered something, I knew not what; but by his looks I thought he would have answered if he could, "Aye, aye, he deserves my love; but hitherto I have known him only to set him at nought; and now I fear him." This was nothing but conjecture; so I went on. "You will ask me perhaps what trouble God takes to recover the sinner, as you would do to find your lost half-crown. Why, he tries different methods with different sinners and with the same sinners at different times. He sends health and plenty to win

them by his benefits, and thus to make them turn from their evil ways out of gratitude to the giver. Again he sends sickness and poverty, and sweeps them with the besom of adversity, and compels them by his severities here to tremble at the thought of the more dreadful miseries which may afflict them hereafter; and thus perhaps at length he lights a candle in their minds, which enables them to see the precipice of destruction on which they were standing; to loathe themselves for their disobedience to his commands; and to understand how just and wise and excellent and good for men themselves all his commands must be. But beware of thinking that this severity is cruelty. No—it is all mercy and goodness. It is the seeking after that which was lost; the intention is thereby to save from perishing everlastingly the precious immortal soul. And now to apply this to yourself; thus it is that he would save yours; and I am the person whom he has sent to light the candle, and to sweep the house to find the sinner who was lost; that is, to bring him to himself and to a just sense of his condition, that he may repent, and turn from Satan to God. And should this be the consequence of his dealings with *you*, happy will you be; and he himself will rejoice over you, and all his holy angels with him, as you would rejoice upon finding some valuable thing which you had lost.”

The sick man returned to me no answer except by his looks, which indicated the opening of a new world before his eyes. I was somewhat fatigued; so I concluded here with desiring him to turn these things over in his thoughts continually, ’till I saw him again; and then kneeling down on his stool, and repeating a single prayer with the benediction, I rose and departed.

At my next call he appeared to be precisely the same. His mother was in the room, and Phœbe was assisting to support him. I took no notice of her at present, waiting ’till I saw my way clearly before me. His mother told me, that he had been in bed but for a few minutes, where he was quite unable to breathe; and I observed that in this more upright posture on the chairs his respiration was very difficult. I asked him as usual, how he did? His answer was that he could not hold it much longer. “God’s will be done!” I said. “But if your time is so nearly out, you should make haste to do all that remains, and which is still in your power. Some things I have mentioned to you already, which are necessary to show the sincerity of your repentance; there is another thing which I have not yet mentioned, and that is the Sacrament, which you ought to receive before you die. Would you wish me to give you the Sacrament?”

“As you please, Sir,” he replied; “you know best.” “Do you understand,” I inquired, “what is meant by taking the Sacra-

ment?" "No," he said; I cannot justly say that I do." I then inquired, if he knew so much about it as to be aware, that the chief part of the ceremony was to eat a small piece of bread, and to drink a little drop of wine. "Yes," he answered, "I know *that*; but *that* is all. What good is to come of it, I never could make out. I will take it, Sir, and thank you too, if it will keep me from going to the wicked place." I hope it may," I said, "if you take it properly. Let us see. Mrs. Barton, have you read to your poor son, and explained to him, what I particularly wished you to do, in my little sermon, respecting our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ?" "I have, Sir," she answered, "two or three times; and I have told him a great deal besides; and if I may be so bold as to speak, I hope, Sir, you will let him take the Sacrament."

"That I will," I said, "most gladly; but he does not understand the meaning of the thing sufficiently to reap any great benefit from it. However we must try to instruct him. Richard, you have been through many a turnpike-gate in your day; have you not? Only say yes, or no, when you find it painful to say more." "Yes," he answered. "And the toll-keepers gave you a ticket, did they not? which you stuck in your hat, and so passed on perhaps through other gates, and on your return through the first gate, without any fresh payment? When they saw your ticket, they opened their gates, and let you through without any inquiry; did they not?" Thus I questioned him, and he answered as before. "Well then, now tell me," I said, "if you think that after receiving the Sacrament the gates of heaven will be thrown open to you, as a matter of course, and without any inquiry into your character." "No," he replied; "I am not so foolish." "I am glad of it, Richard," I said; "but many people are foolish enough to think so. If *that* were true, it would be very easy to get to heaven indeed! However, you are not one of those foolish people; and you probably think therefore that the Sacrament will do you no good at all, unless you take it in the proper manner, and with a proper understanding of it. Is this your opinion?"

"Yes," he replied. "You are right," I continued; "and now I desire you to consider that the bread and wine which we eat and drink in the Sacrament are not common bread and wine, such as we eat and drink on common occasions, and at common meals, but tokens or representations of the body and blood of our Redeemer Jesus Christ. Do you know my meaning when I say tokens, or representations?" "No, indeed," he answered. "Well," I said, "you know what counters are?" "Yes, to be sure I do," was his reply. "You play with them, do you not?" I asked; "and they sometimes stand for sums of money? that is, they are the tokens or representations of so many shillings, or pence, or what not?" "Oh, yes, Sir," he answered, "I understand you now." "Very well; and

these counters," I asked again, "when you played with them, always reminded you, did they not? of the more valuable thing, the money, for which they stood?" "Yes," he said. "In the same manner then," I proceeded, "when you see the bread and wine in the Sacrament, they should remind you of the precious body and blood of Christ; and further, when you see the Minister breaking the bread, and pouring out the wine, this should remind you how that precious body was bruised and broken on the cross, and how that precious blood flowed out of the wounds which were made by the nails that were driven through his hands and feet, and by the spear which pierced his side; and what is of most consequence, then you should think within yourself, and say, all this suffering he underwent for *me*, a sinner; the punishment that was due to my sins he took upon himself, and he died to save *me* from the anger of the great God, whom I have so often provoked. Shall I not love him then, now that I am come to the knowledge of what he has done for me? Shall I not, as long as I live, do what I can to keep up in my mind the remembrance of his death, by which I may be saved from the most terrible punishment? Such should be your feelings, and thus should you reason with yourself; and I tell you besides, that Jesus Christ himself commanded us to keep up the remembrance of his death by eating the bread and drinking the wine. It was no invention of ours, but a positive command of *his*, which he gave at a most awful and affecting moment, the very night before his crucifixion; so that it was his dying command, and one therefore that we ought to be the more careful to obey. Long before this he had told those who were with him, that they could not enter into his kingdom, without eating his flesh, and drinking his blood. What he meant they could not *then* understand, but it was clearly explained to them afterwards, when he broke some bread into pieces, and gave it to them, and said, 'Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for *you*; and when he poured out some wine; and bid them all drink of it, and said, 'This is my blood which is shed for you.' Upon the whole, then, Richard, if you comprehend what I have been telling you, you will perceive, that by taking the Sacrament, you will obey one of your great Saviour's commands; you will bring forcibly into your thoughts the memory of his death, which is of more consequence to you than all the riches in the world; and, as you will eat the bread and drink the wine, which represent his body and blood, he will in a manner be joined with you, and dwell in you; and *you* will be one with *him*, and *he* with *you*; and this must needs carry you to heaven with him."

"But then, to entitle yourself to this wonderful benefit, you must receive the Sacrament worthily; that is, you must humble yourself before God; you must hate your sins, and yourself for committing them, and for offending so good and gracious a being as God is;

you must make up all your quarrels with all your neighbours, and with every body; and you must resolve, should it please God to spare your life, (which he can do, even now, when you seem dying, you must resolve to follow new courses, and to be a good man. Not that you will ever have strength enough of your own to stand upright, and to keep you from falling again into sin; but God himself, if you make these resolutions honestly, and pray to him continually, will give you all the strength that is necessary, and will send you that other excellent Being, who is called the Holy Ghost, and who will make *you* holy as *he* is holy."

In this manner, but at more length, did I endeavour to explain to this poor ignorant man the sacred rite of the Lord's Supper, and, as far as I could judge, not entirely without success. All he said was as before, that he would do the best he could, and that he wished the Sacrament to be administered to him. This then being settled, I turned to Mrs. Barton, and said, "*You*, I presume, will be one of the communicants." "If you please, Sir," she answered. "*You*," I continued, "have received the Sacrament before upon a very painful occasion; this also is, if possible, a still more painful one; the hand of God cuts down your children in the flower of their age. Will *you*, your husband, and the rest of you, be ever sufficiently warned and instructed by these calamities, to prepare for an event which may happen to any of you, at any hour?" She sobbed aloud, and could not speak. "However," I said, "you are going to take the Sacrament once more. Amongst other things which you may think it right to do to make yourself the more fit for it, do not forget to ask God to forgive you for neglecting to come to the proper place; to the sacred altar itself; and there to pick up the crumbs which fall from the Lord's table, and which are more than any of us are worthy to eat."

She was overwhelmed by this sudden unexpected rebuke, and covered her face with her apron, and remained speechless. Then directing my eyes to Phœbe, I said somewhat sternly to her, "Phœbe, if you had done as I bid you, I might perhaps have invited you to eat and drink with us. But what fellowship can there be between light and darkness? You have chosen the darkness of your own free will. You would not open your eyes, and see what was good for yourself and pleasing to God. But he will never suffer us to mock him; what we sow, *that* we shall reap. God fixed the day, beyond which your marriage with Richard should be impossible. You let it pass without heeding it; it will never return. What remains for you, but shame and sorrow!" Then relaxing into a milder tone, I proceeded thus: "I do not say these severe things to you, Phœbe, in order to give you unnecessary pain; but to lead you to a true sense of your dreadful situation, and thereby to a thorough repentance, which alone, by God's mercy, and Christ's

death for you, and the help of the Holy Spirit, can save you, both body and soul, from everlasting ruin."

The poor woman had sunk upon a chair, unable to support herself any longer. The chair shook under her. I went on therefore still more gently. "I wound you, Phœbe, to cure you. I lay your conscience bare, that you may see how black it is, and that you may pray to God to make it as white as snow; which he can do, if it please him, and if he sees but the least spark of a wish in you to return to him; for then he will receive you with open arms, as the kind indulgent father received with joy his prodigal returning penitent son. And for this purpose, whenever you desire it, you may have my instructions, and any other assistance in my power. But, before I admit you to the Sacrament, I must see more convincing proofs than I have yet done, of your intentions to cast off the works of darkness, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Who then will be the other person to accompany the sick man in the performance of this great duty?" "Pray let *me*, Sir," said William Barton's wife, who had been present during the whole scene; "I have listened to every word, and I hope I shall be much the better for it." "I hope so too," I replied. "Let me find you therefore here when I return in the evening with every thing necessary for the Sacrament."

Thus I departed for a few hours. At the appointed time I came back, and administered the holy rite with all the decency and order that were possible (but little enough) in such an apartment. The posture of the man; the way in which he was supported, and his livid appearance, brought forcibly to my recollection the wonderful picture of St. Jerome in the act of receiving extreme unction. Phœbe was upon her knees, expecting perhaps to be included amongst the communicants, but I passed by her, without offering her the consecrated elements; not thinking it right to expose her to the apparent hazard of incurring the guilt of our Lord's body and blood. The sick man himself received the bread and wine with the greatest humility, and with all the devotion of which he was capable.

When the ceremony was finished, after a short pause for private prayer, I addressed him thus: "My poor friend, you have now done what Jesus Christ, your blessed Saviour, commanded us all to do. So far, it is good for you at all events. It would have been better, without doubt, to have been all your life in the habit of doing it in God's own house. But they, who neglect any command, for any number of years, cannot act more wisely than by obeying it at the last, be it ever so late. They should never say, 'we have neglected it so long, that God will not accept it *now*;' the time is past and gone;" they should never talk in that manner, but obey, whilst it is in their power to obey; and pray to God most

earnestly, that of his gracious mercy he may forgive the former neglect, and accept the present obedience. This is your case, Richard, and you see what still remains; prayer, earnest prayer. Under these circumstances, you may look back to the parables which your mother read to you, and one of which I explained; you may look back to them, and be cheered and comforted by them on the bed of death itself. You are the lost sheep; you are the lost piece of money; you are the prodigal son, who left his good father, and wasted all his substance in riotous living. But the lost sheep and the lost piece of money were both found again; and great was the joy to those who sought and found them; yea, so great was their joy, that, for the moment, it was even greater than all the joy which they felt for those that had never been lost at all. May it be *your* lot thus to be found of God; and thus to be rejoiced over! And as to the prodigal son, the very moment that he came to a true sense of his condition, and confessed his wickedness, and set out to return to his father, his dear and most excellent father, knowing of it, had compassion upon him, and ran out to meet him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him, and took him back into his house; and, to show the greatness of his joy, he made a rich feast for his family, and they all began to sing, and dance, and be merry; so that with all these extraordinary signs of the Father's joy, it appeared to be much more than he had ever felt for his other son, who had never offended him. May God, the kind Almighty Father of us all, for Christ's sake, receive *you* in this manner, and may it be said of *you*, as it was of the prodigal son, 'he was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' " "Amen! Amen!" said the old mother; and immediately replacing the things in my basket, I took my leave, not knowing how to finish the business of the day with more solemnity, or with a greater effect.

The next day, wishing to see the poor man once more, and thinking that once more would be all; I visited him with some anxiety; but, to my great surprise, I found him for the first time in his bed, calm and composed, and breathing with perfect freedom; and, as any person might naturally have thought, having undergone a wonderful change for the better. Immediately upon entering I was told this by his mother; and seeing the man himself in so cheerful a state, comparatively with his former distress and dejection, I shook him by the hand, and congratulated him upon the apparent amendment of his health; inquiring whether he did not really feel that his sickness was very much abated. "Yes, Sir," he replied, "thank God for it! And I think I shall soon get well again."

This bodily improvement was a convincing proof to *me* that the man's mind had been improved; and that the load of guilt, under

which he had been labouring, having been considerably lightened by his own repentance, by taking the Sacrament, and by the instructions which he had now received in the Christian doctrines, a reaction had been made upon his body, and some of the evils which preyed upon it had been partly removed. It would be difficult to assign any other cause of the alteration which had taken place. The doctors had entirely abandoned him to *me*. I secretly therefore ascribed it to God's good providence thus rewarding my endeavours. Not being of opinion, however, that the sick man should be encouraged in supposing that all his danger was at an end, I said, "Your disorder, Richard, is a very uncertain one; I would not have you too sure that your life will be spared altogether; you must therefore make the best use that you can of these happy moments of ease, to prepare yourself so much the better to meet your Judge, when the time may come, whether sooner or later." These words damped his hopes, as I saw by his countenance; and indeed as I wished they might. I was afraid that he had already begun to relax his efforts to reconcile himself with God; so I proceeded in this manner.

"Now, Richard, I perceive how dear your soul is to God, and how desirous he is to save it! If it had not been so, he would have cut you down at once in his wrath. But he did not deal with you thus. He sent indeed a terrible sickness upon you, which threatened death at every instant; but he sent also at the same time his Holy Spirit, to dwell with you, and to put into your thoughts the fear of hell; and grief and sorrow for your sins; and purposes and resolutions of amendment of life, if your life should be prolonged; and to open your understanding, that you might understand the gracious doctrines of the Bible. After this, he enabled you to partake of Christ's body and blood; so that you might set up a fresh claim to that covenant of mercy and salvation through Christ, into which you entered at your baptism, but which you have since virtually renounced by the conduct of your life. And now he has removed all your pains, to try, perhaps, whether you will go on to improve during this blessed opportunity of ease, as you did during the violence of your disease; or whether your mind will turn back again to your sins. What a noble occasion has he given you to prove that your repentance is sincere, and that no expectations of a longer life shall have the bad effect of making you to swerve from *Him*! Let us see therefore what can be done by prayer, to obtain the further help of the Holy Ghost, that he may bring to perfection the good work which he has begun in you.

Upon saying this, I knelt down by the bed-side, and opening into the Psalms, I selected, according to my usual practice, whatever I thought suitable to his case and level to his comprehension, sentences expressive of gratitude and praise. and others of suppli-

cation for fresh assistance and support. The 145th Psalm alone furnished me with much of what I wanted at the present juncture; but I altered the arrangement of the verses, and here and there changed a word or two. The order which I adopted was this: 8th, 9th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 5th, 1st, 2nd. In the 141st, 142nd, and 143rd Psalms also there was much that was convenient for me, which I altered and arranged according to my own ideas of the poor man's wants, and which is sufficiently obvious without being particularized. Having thus employed myself about ten minutes, and having supplied him with abundance of matter and expressions for prayer and praise, I read the concluding portion of the Litany, beginning with the ejaculation, "Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us!" This having been finished, I shook him once more by the hand, and left him.

At the following visit a new event occurred, of which I endeavoured to make some use; but I fear in vain. It is remarkable, that, in attending upon the daughter and the son, I never once had met with their father or brothers, although I went at irregular times; nor did I now; but the sick man's bed was surrounded with others, who were reported to be his companions in drinking and gaming, and the rest of his iniquities. There were the two Bennets and James Warren, and one or two more of that class, with whose names I was not then acquainted. In passing through the room below I was told by William Barton's wife, that there were several people above with her brother-in-law whom perhaps I might not like to see; but I pushed on the more eagerly, without waiting to be announced, lest they might occupy the stair-case before me, and so make their escape. "I must take care," I said, "that they do no mischief; and I must send them away with some good advice."

Under common circumstances, perhaps, these people would have insulted me personally, as they had trampled on my little dissuasive from swearing. With such men the Parson was always a fit subject for ridicule; and in passing a knot of them together in this neighbourhood I had sometimes overheard them making insolent remarks, which evidently pointed at myself. Besides, some of them were personally irritated against me, on account of the Association, and my constant endeavours to deprive them of their ancient resource, the poor's rate. However, I had no doubt that I should be more than a match for them in a private room, and with with one of their companions stretched on the bed of sickness before their eyes; so I entered fearlessly amongst them.

My arrival was quite unexpected. They were standing with their hats on. Instantly upon seeing me all hats were off; and they began to exhibit symptoms of alarm, as if they were caught in a snare; and, under pretence of making way for me to approach the

bed, they were gradually shuffling aside to get out of the room. No doubt they had an inward respect for my spiritual office and character, even against their wills. Having lately too been the witnesses, in several cases, of my readiness to visit their sick friends, however wicked, and however wretched their abodes, and to relieve all their bodily wants, as well as to pray for the salvation of their souls, they might have been led to conceive a different opinion of my other proceedings from that which they had been used to entertain. But, be this as it may, observing their trepidation, and conscious of my authority over them, I cut off their retreat by wheeling to the left towards the fire, instead of advancing straight towards the bed. By this manœuvre, upon arriving at a certain point, from which the sick man was visible, I had them all between myself and the window, and it was impossible for them to escape without rudely pushing before me, which they seemed by no means inclined to attempt. From this position then I began to speak; first addressing my patient, and gradually turning my discourse to his friends.

"Well, Richard, my good man," I said, "how are you to-day? But I hardly need ask such a question; for I see by your looks, and by your posture in the bed, that you are better even than yesterday." "Yes, Sir," he replied, "I *am* indeed." "I am glad of it," I continued; "and here are your friends, I suppose, come to rejoice with you about it. It does them credit. If they thought as I did about you, they must have thought that you would have been a dead man long before this." "We did, Sir," said one of them; "we all thought so." "It is a wonderful thing," I proceeded, "certainly; this recovery of yours, Richard; it is like receiving you back from the grave. Do you not think so yourself?" "Yes, Sir," he answered; "one foot was in it, to be sure."

"Well, then," I asked, "what is the cause of this sudden and surprising change? Your medicines, I presume, have done wonders." "My medicines, Sir?" he replied. "I have taken none. The doctor would not give me any." "Then we must look for some other cause," I said. "What can it be? It was perhaps the strength of your constitution, which has carried you through this terrible attack." "How can that be," he inquired eagerly, "with such a leg as I have had for so long a time? No, no; that can never be the case." "Well then," I said, "we must consider again. There must be some cause; nothing can happen without a cause; and, as it seems, we can find no human cause, no cause here on earth, where must we look?" "Why to Heaven, I should think," was his answer. "You are in the right, certainly," I said; "and very glad I am to perceive that you are now wise enough to look up to Heaven, and to be aware that your blessings come down from thence. But I must tell you, that if you had been taking medicines, and if the medicines had appeared to agree with you; or if

you had enjoyed the stoutest constitution of body possible, so as to enable you to bear the utmost pain and want of food for ever so long a time, 'till the violence of your disorder abated, still your amendment would be owing to God above. You would not have seen it so clearly, or perhaps not at all; you might have said, it is the medicine; it is my constitution; and your friends might have talked in that manner; but it does not signify, God sends us every good thing that we have, by one way, or by another way, or by no way that we can find out; and it is too often the case with men in general, who think little or nothing about God, that if a blessing come to them in some way which they can account for, they do not see the hand of God in it at all; whereas his hand is in it just the same. By his blessing their labour and industry procure them plenty of food and clothing; whilst men think it is all their own work. By his blessing their houses are not burnt down, and all their property destroyed; whilst they think it is their own care that preserves them. Well; what is to be done then? Why, sometimes God lets people alone to follow their own fancies: sometimes he sends them his blessings in so unusual a way, that they cannot help saying, this is God's doing; and happy would it be for them, if from the first moment of finding him out, they would turn to him and worship him, and serve him with all their minds and all their hearts. This is what God expects and deserves from *you*, Richard; he has been so gracious as neither to kill you at once, nor to suffer you to recover in any way that you can account for; so that you have been forced in a manner to see his hand in the business; and now it is your turn to show your thankfulness by loving him, and fearing him, and keeping all his commandments for the rest of your life. Should not this be so?"

"To be sure it should," he replied. "Well," I said, "but I think I can tell you something more about it. One thing indeed I am quite certain of, namely, that God was pleased with your behaviour when your pains and sufferings were so great. And you know the reason why. You were sorry that you had ever offended him, by breaking any of his laws; you prayed to him both aloud and silently in your own breast, that he would forgive you; you resolved and promised in your own mind, and between *him* and *you*, that if you lived you would live very differently in future; you came to the knowledge of his blessed Son, Jesus Christ, your only Saviour and Redeemer; and to show that you trusted in him to be a partaker of that salvation which he procured, from the punishments of the next world, you received his sacred body and blood. These were the things which you did; and these are the things which always please God; and therefore it is no wonder that he has extended his goodness towards you, and has delivered you from your bodily pain; and, what is of much

more consequence to you, he has enabled you, if you use his help, and act up to your intentions, to obtain a greater reward hereafter. Every man, you know, will be judged and treated according to his works. But what good works have *you* been yet able to perform? None whatever, since your repentance and receiving the Sacrament. If you live, you may do many, every day of your life; and it is only the power of doing these good works that makes life valuable at all. If you ask me, what good works a person of your humble rank may be able to do; I answer in a few words, which will show you, however, that there is good within your power of great extent, and of great importance. How excellent is truth, and how abominable all falsehood and lying! How commendable to speak always with calmness and propriety; and to avoid all angry, quarrelsome, abusive language; all cursing and swearing; all taking of God's name in vain; never indeed to utter the name of God, without feeling an awe of his power and goodness! How becoming a man is sobriety; how beastly is drunkenness! How just to the community, and how self-satisfactory, to get your own living by the labour of your hands and the sweat of your brow; doing no injury to any of your neighbours, by taking what is not your own; no, not even stealing a stick out of their hedges, or a turnip out of their fields! How delightful, how Christian, to be seen always on the Sabbath-day at Church with your family; and to pass the evening in reading, or in hearing your children read, the holy Bible! I could mention many things more, but these will prove to you what an abundance of good works will be within your reach, if God should restore your health, and how many you are capable of even now. But if you had died without doing any of these things, and if God had received you into heaven for the sake of your mere sorrow and contrition, through Christ Jesus, you must have sat down in the very lowest station. Is not God then astonishingly gracious to you in giving you this chance of obtaining a higher station of glory and happiness? Not that the good works which you may do have any real merit in themselves to carry you there; but it has pleased God to require them of you, and to proportion your reward to them, because they are suitable to your own nature, and useful to your fellow-creatures, and such as will make you resemble in a faint degree God himself. To live in this manner, Richard, is to live indeed; and now that you have had one foot in the grave, you can see it plainly. When we are going to die, or think so, then our eyes are opened and we can discern the truth. Before, we are blind. But what say your friends here to all these matters? Have they found out the right way, in the midst of health, and strength, and prosperity? Better it would be for them to do so; but if not, it would be happy for them to be afflicted by God, as you have been, that they might be brought to the same mind which you have. Have you told them this, Richard?"

“No, Sir,” he replied, “I cannot say that I have.” Well then,” I said, “I have told them for you; but they would perhaps have believed *you* better than *me*. Yet they have no reason, that I know of, to disbelieve *me*. Am not I the Parson, (turning more directly towards them, I put the question,) am not I the Parson, appointed by God’s good providence to watch over you, for the salvation of your souls?” They were very uneasy, and restless, and loath to answer; so I questioned them again. “And to whom is the salvation of your souls of any consequence, if not to yourselves? I have no interest in it whatever, except to do my duty, and to please God. I ask you for no fee; I wish to get nothing from you at all. On the very contrary, I am ready to spend my own substance upon *you*, in your necessities. Am I not then to be believed?”

They were quite dumb, and more and more disturbed; conscience-struck, and wishing themselves, as it seemed, a thousand miles off. I continued, “And what is it that I tell you? I tell you that there are two worlds; this and the next. And what is this? Why short, very short, even to those who live the longest in it. And what is the next? It is eternal; it will have no end; it will last for ever. Millions and millions, and tens of millions of years, will pass, and you will be no nearer to the end of it than at the first. This life, therefore, compared with the life to come, is but a speck in the sky; a drop of water in the ocean; an atom of dust in the whole earth. What folly, then, even if this were the whole of the case, what amazing folly to think so much of this world, and so little of the next!

“But this is only a small part of the case. We know pretty well the good and the evil of this short world; but the good and the evil of the eternal world, into which we must all soon enter, is beyond and above human knowledge, experience, and imagination. The happiness of it no eye of man hath seen, no ear hath heard, no heart hath conceived. At God’s right hand there are rivers and seas of pleasures for evermore. The misery of it also is black with insufferable, indescribable horrors. Who can dwell with everlasting burnings? Who can explain the terrible lake of fire and brimstone, which is never put out; the gnawing worm which never dies; the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth amongst the damned, without stop, without end?

“Now then, that you see more of the case, now calculate the folly, the gross stupidity, the brutal senselessness, nay, the utter insanity and madness, of those who barter away their precious immortal souls, capable of such happiness, liable to such misery; who barter them away for the petty, wretched, low, grovelling pleasures of this world. Pleasures indeed will they call them? Pleasures of the ale-house, of the skittle-yard, of the brothel? I ask you, Bennetts, and you, Warren, and the rest of you, whose faces I know, but not

your names, I ask you all, are these the things, smoking, and drinking, and gambling, and singing lewd songs, and following loose women, are these the things which make your happiness? Are these the things, for which you are content to give up heaven, and be cast into hell? For of these things hell is the sure consequence. Answer me, you who can; you who understand me. Have you made up your minds to this?"

Their countenances bespoke alternations of anger and dismay, guilt and shame. I vexed them deeply; but it was evident that they respected and feared me. At length one of the Bennetts spoke, and said, "We are slandered, Sir, if you have been told that we are men of such a character; we work, when we can get work, as hard as any set of men in the parish; we seldom come upon the poor's-rate, except in a hard winter, or when we are sick; and if we could get some decent clothes, we might come to Church. But these which you see are all that we have for week-days and Sundays too. We could not come to Church in these."

Having at last induced them to talk, I relinquished the high tone of preaching, and relaxed into the lower and milder of conversation. "Yes," I said, "*that* may be very true; but, my good fellows, how came you to have no better clothes? You are all young and unmarried; you might get the same wages throughout the year as others do, who have wives and families to maintain out of them; some of you, I know, get very large wages in the summer by brickmaking, or other jobs; why not lay by a part for the winter, or for sickness, or to furnish your houses when you marry, and to keep yourselves at all times in respectable clothing? Have you ever heard of my saving-bank?"

"Yes," replied Warren; "but I never could spare any thing to put in there." "No," I said; "because you spend all that you can scrape together in liquor. How many scores have you got now against you in the different public houses?" He was abashed, and the rest looked significantly at him. "I shall not trouble myself," I continued, "to go and inquire; nor do I wish to know; but remember, that if you can conceal these things from *me*, you cannot conceal them from God. He is sure to know, whatever you may say to deceive others, how you spend both your time and money. And then there is your poor old mother, whom you have suffered to become a pauper, and dependent on the parish for her support. All the time that you were a child, and till you grew up to be able to work for yourself, did she ever apply to the parish for you?" "Never," he answered, "that I ever heard of." "Never," I said; "certainly never; she told me so. And now, I ask you, is it not a much easier thing for *you* to maintain *her*, than it was for *her* to maintain *you*? Is this honouring your mother? Is this common gratitude? Is this returning good for good? How many cares

and troubles did she constantly undergo for you? How did she labour with her hands, without ceasing, that she might bring up a son to be the staff of her age, without being talked of as a parish-pensioner? But you have disappointed all her hopes in this respect, and, I fear, in too many other respects besides, which I cannot now stay to mention. However, you have heard what I have said to poor Richard here, and I say the same to *you*. If you are sorry, as you seem to be, now that I have pointed out your errors to you, and if you turn over a new leaf, God will forgive it all. And I advise you most earnestly, as your best friend, to do so; for if not, your soul is lost for ever."

My solemn tone had again returned; he cast his eyes to the ground, and appeared to be looking for excuses in vain; at length he said, "I am no scholar, Sir; I was never taught any of these things." "But you can read; can you not?" I asked. "Yes," he replied, "I can read a little." "Well then," I rejoined, "there is your Bible to read; I know that your mother has got one; and there is our Parochial Library, as we call it, from whence you may get plenty of nice plain instructive little books; but, above all, there is your Church to go to, where you might learn every thing necessary for you, not only in this world, but also to prepare you for the next."

Thinking by this time that I had spoken quite enough to them, and being also anxious myself to go somewhere else; and besides, not wishing to leave them in the room after I was gone, I now said, "I have a word to mention to Richard in private, before I take my leave, and therefore I will thank you all to go." They began to move immediately upon receiving this happy unexpected release; nor did they stay a moment to bid their sick companion a single farewell; they were quite crest fallen, and seemed scarcely to know whether they stood upon their heads or their heels. I gave way for them to pass, and just said, as they went by, "I hope in future we shall be better friends; I am sure we shall, if you become better men; and then you will always find me most ready and willing to do what I can for you." The last of them made me a slight inclination of their heads at this speech, and they all soon disappeared down the tottering staircase.

When the clattering of their nail-shod feet was over, I went close to the bed-side, and said, "Richard, you must be careful about these men. I strongly suspect that they came here, upon learning that you were so much better, in order to tell you, that they expected soon to see you amongst them again. Was this so?" "It was, Sir," he answered. "Ah! Richard, Richard," I went on, "you will be in great danger, if you recover enough to go abroad. Will these people attend to what I have been pressing upon them?" "Only, I fear, for a little while," was his reply. "And I fear

so too," I said; "so that you must beware of them to the very utmost of your power, if you wish to remain in the favour of God, and in the faith of Christ, and in the hope of being saved. And I must remind you of one thing which is very terrible; that they who fall back into their former courses after having been once rescued from them, become ten times more the children of the devil than before. God grant that this may not be your case! And now I will kneel down and pray with you;" which having done, I rose and hastened away.

From this time I visited him regularly twice a week for nearly two months; in which period he never made any great improvement in his health, nor was he ever much worse. The fluctuations on one side and on the other side were very slight; but his entire recovery became less certain every day.

Long as the interval was, no opportunity presented itself of making any extraordinary attempts to do good. His mother and William Barton's wife were the only persons whom I ever saw with him. Phœbe, not being absolutely wanted at home, went out to work daily, and gained something considerable for the necessities of the family. He himself, as I was willing to think, being more and more instructed in the Bible, and not relaxing in his penitence, was more and more fit to die. His companions had shaken him a little; but they troubled him no further. One such visit was enough; and they feared to encounter the parson again. Richard was thus more fit to die; but his great desire was to live; and he persuaded himself that he should; although I never ceased to warn him, how very unlikely it was to be so.

I did not record the conversations that passed between us, or rather what I said to him on these occasions, (for he was generally silent himself) because similar things are recorded in the case of others with more interest. My chief object was to wean him step by step from this world; and the chief obstacle was, his fears of the next; so that, what with wishing to live, and thinking that he should live, I made but little progress. To the happiness and glory of heaven he could not elevate his views at all. At the end of the time however, as I said before, he was much improved in knowledge, and he was a much better man; his penitence continuing, and all difficult temptation having ceased.

Under these circumstances I was sent for in haste one morning between the two days of my regular weekly visits; and I found him on the chairs precisely in the same condition as when I first saw him. I was deeply shocked, and for a time unable to speak. He looked at me with an expression of countenance which I too well understood; his lips quivered; the tears gushed from his eyes. His mother and Phœbe were weeping on each side of him; Wil-

liam's wife was not unmoved. His father was not present, nor any of his brothers. At length collecting myself I said, "Ah! my my poor friend, I am sorry to see you thus! I fear you are in great bodily distress; but your mind, I trust, is firm in the faith of Christ, and stayed on the mercy of God, who has promised not to cast out any who come to him."

He had strength perhaps, but he had not spirit to answer me a word; his hopes of life were all dashed to the ground; he was quite broken down; and he seemed to see death, the king of terrors, advancing upon him with hasty strides. His mother and Phœbe alternately wiped his face which was bedewed with mingled sweat and tears. I too should have thought that he was at the point to die, if I had not seen him in an apparently similar situation before. With the view of trying to compose him I offered to pray; and so kneeling on his foot-stool, I said, "Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us! Lord, have mercy upon us!" And then I repeated that most beautiful and touching prayer, which begins, "O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need; we fly unto thee for succour," &c. &c. The part which speaks of a possibility of a restoration to health by the power of God which is able to do all things, I suppressed; and I resumed the thread of the prayer with the words, "so fit and prepare him, we beseech thee, against the hour of death," &c. &c. This is an alteration which I frequently make for various reasons in the cases of various persons; sometimes not wishing, and sometimes being unable, to tell them that "the time of their dissolution draweth near," or to inspire them with the hope of "a longer continuance amongst us."

This being finished, I passed as usual to the Psalms, and made an appropriate selection of sentences for his benefit, and to guide him to the several feelings which became his present situation. The sixth Psalm first caught my eye; almost the whole of which was applicable; and I dwelt upon it as a basis for a considerable time; altering and enlarging, as I found convenient. The third verse I changed in this manner—"My soul also is sore troubled; but thou, O Lord, support, uphold, and comfort me!" The fifth again I modelled thus—"O, remember me, even in the midst of death! O, forget me not, when I go down into the grave!" This was totally different from what the Psalmist himself intended to say; but the words suggested it to me, and the thought was what I seemed to want for my poor patient in his extremity. The sixth verse I put in this manner—"Help me, O God; lest I be weary of my groaning, and abide not patiently; lo, every night," &c. &c. The seventh thus; "My beauty is gone for very trouble; and worn away, because of the long affliction which thou hast laid upon me." Then the eighth and ninth; "away from me, all ye that work deceit and

lying, and follow after vain pleasures; away from me, all ye wicked and foolish people; for I will put my trust in the Lord; and he will listen to the voice of my weeping; he will hear my petitions; he will receive my prayer; he will cheer me, when death hangs over me." Then I fell upon the the sixteenth and seventeenth Psalms, which I adapted to my purpose on similar principles; but I will not now detail the precise alterations which occurred to me at the moment. The success of the whole appeared to correspond to my wishes; Richard became wonderfully tranquil; but he said nothing; yet his desire that I should proceed was evident in his looks. After a short pause, therefore, I pronounced the Lord's prayer; and then the Collect in the office for the Communion of the Sick, with the omission of one sentence; and lastly the Benediction at the end of the Visitation.

Upon this, rising on my feet and standing before him, I expressed my hopes, that he was now very comfortable in his mind at least. No answer being given, his mother informed me, that the present seizure had deprived him of the power of speech, for an hour or two, which had afterwards returned, and was now perhaps lost again. His understanding however was quite alive; so I said, "How good and gracious God is to you, Richard, even to the end! What a great mercy it is, that you have all the faculties of your mind about you even now! Many people are delirious; many are childish; many are insensible altogether of their own condition, and of what passes around them; so that they can make no use whatever of the most awful and important moments of their existence. But it is not so with *you*. God does not permit you indeed to praise him, or to pray to him with your tongue and voice; but his candle of the mind still burns within your breast, and by the light of it you are still able to praise him and to pray to him in silence. And he will hear you just as well. Thoughts fly up to *him*, as well as words. And you have much to think of; much to praise him for; much to pray for.

"Think how sin had brought you to the brink of the pit of destruction; and your eyes were shut, and saw not the urgent danger, though gaping under your feet. But God sent calamities and sicknesses upon you; and roused you out of your deep and perilous slumber; and cut you off from your sinful course of life; and separated you from every temptation, and from the possibility of returning to it. He meant to save, and not to destroy you; and therefore your sickness has been long and painful; it has been such as to wean you from the world, and to show you the emptiness and the folly of its pleasures; it has given you the means of learning who your God is, who your Saviour, who your Sanctifier; what is heaven, and what hell. You were a heathen in a Christian land; your sickness has made a Christian of you; and, if you do not die,

like the penitent thief on the cross, close by your Redeemer's side, yet you will die after having partaken of his body and blood.

"Think of these things; they are worthy of all your thoughts; and then your thoughts will mount up in prayer and praise to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. You will praise them for all that they have done for you; for snatching you like a brand out of the fire, ready to be consumed; for bringing you into the narrow road which leads to heaven. You will pray to them, whilst a breath of life remains, to finish their good work, and to make you fit for their society. Without holiness you cannot see them; without the Holy Ghost you cannot be holy; to *him* therefore you must pray, to the very last, to purify your heart from all the love of sin, which may yet lurk about you; to fill you with a thorough hatred and detestation of it; and that you may thus at length close your eyes on this world in peace with your God, with your Saviour, and with yourself; and open them in the next world to everlasting happiness, and everlasting honour."

Here I stopped, intending to say no more; but looking round and seeing the old mother and Phœbe weeping; and recollecting, that something perhaps might still be done for Phœbe's benefit; I resumed my speech, and said; "the salvation of your own soul, my good Richard, at such a moment as this, must have the first place in your prayers; but pray for these too; for your mother, who has never deserted you in your distress; for Phœbe who has laboured with her hands to support *you* and the children. They are weeping for the loss of you; but what is *their* loss will be *your* gain, if God should take you to himself; and God has done so much for you, that I think he will do every thing else, if you endure faithfully to the end. Whilst you pray for this, pray too that *they* also may get to heaven hereafter. Here is poor Phœbe; she is, I believe, sorry for what is past; she has done something to make amends for her former misdoings; she will have many difficulties, and many temptations to struggle with. God only knows how she will get through them! But I am sure she will not be able to get through them without frequent prayer. Do you therefore pray for her; and let her pray for herself; and then perhaps you may meet her again in heaven, cleansed from all sin, and in pure robes of white!"

Thus I ended. The effect seemed to be great upon all. Phœbe was in agonies; the face of the dying man was convulsed; and I hurried from a scene, which began to be too interesting to bear.

Calling on the morrow I was informed in the chamber below that Richard Barton was dead. "He died, Sir," said William Barton's wife, "about the middle of the night. No great change took place in him, after you left us, 'till an hour or two before he

breathed his last. He recovered his speech, but he said nothing particular. His mother was gone home too ill to be sent for again; his brothers were all with him, and Phœbe and myself. He was seized with a fit; and afterwards seemed to be quite senseless, and knew nobody; dozing without pain 'till God took him. I hope he is gone to heaven, Sir." "I hope so too, good woman," I answered; he was penitent, I think." "Yes, Sir," she replied; "I am sure he was from the very first."

"Will his death," I asked, "thus cut down as he is in the vigour of his years, produce any good effect upon you all?" She hesitated; so I inquired again; "Where is Phœbe?" "She is up-stairs, Sir," said she, "alone with the body. Will you walk up, and see it?" "No," I answered; "I can do no more now than bury him. A corpse is an awful sight. It shows the mighty irresistible power of God, and the weakness, the nothingness of men. I may be a corpse; you may be a corpse, in an instant, if God so will. Should we not then be always ready to meet him? Do you suppose beforehand that your last sickness will be as long as Richard's?"

"No, Sir," she answered; "I leave it all to God." "Was not your neighbour, Mr. Sambrook," I asked, "killed in a moment, by a fall from his cart?" "Yes, Sir," she replied. "And was he prepared for death, do you think?" I asked again. "No, Sir," she said quickly; "*that* he was not." "Then *you*, I hope, as you seem so calm about yourself, (thus I continued) are well prepared?" "Thank God!" she answered; "I am not so bad as he was." "Perhaps not," I said; "but it is very unwise to compare yourself with others, unless they are very good and excellent persons whom you may make your pattern. Do you imagine that God will save *you*, because there are others in the world much worse than yourself?" "No," she replied, "I do not think he will." "Then," I proceeded, "it is of no use to you to be better than those who are bad. You must be careful to perform all the duties which belong to your own station, whatever may be done by others; and it is by those duties, that your great Judge will try you. Suppose therefore he should question you, whether you have been regular in your attendance at his holy Church; would you excuse yourself by saying that Mr. Sambrook never went there, and that he had been guilty of many wicked things from which you were perfectly clear? If you did, would not the Judge stop you and say, I do not ask you what Mr. Sambrook did, or what Mr. Sambrook was, or whether you are better than *him*; but I ask you this simple question, whether you have been regular at my Church. Answer to *that*, and that alone. What would you do?"

She was convicted in her conscience; but endeavoured to evade the conclusion, by assuring me, that she wished to come to Church, and was only kept away by many great difficulties and inconveni-

ences. "In general," I said, "where there is a will, there will also be a way; but whatever your reasons are, you must take care to be sure that they are such as God himself will approve. He knows already what they are; and as far as I can guess about them, I should think he would not approve of them. But again; suppose he should ask secondly, whether you sent your children to school regularly, or not; must you not be compelled to plead guilty of not sending them? And then he might say, *you*, their mother, have been the cause of the ruin and damnation of your own children. Can any of Mr. Sambrook's sins be greater than this? And I have sent afflictions into your family to make you consider and examine your conduct and amend whatever is wrong; therefore you are the more inexcusable. Thus might God reason with you. He does so by *me* his minister. Think of it. Good morning to you." So I left her in confusion.

§ 3. JOHN AND ANN BARTON.

AFTER this second death in the family of the Bartons, I had no intercourse with any of them for several months, except when we met accidentally on the roads; and on those occasions there was no opportunity for serious conversation. When I called at their houses, it so happened that I never surprised them at home. The appearance however of the old mother, betokening a gradual decay, led me to suppose that she would soon be confined within doors altogether, and that I in consequence should be sent for to visit her. Meanwhile, both herself, and her daughter-in-law, William's wife, were now and then at church. Not so the father, or the sons; and Phœbe had been removed by the parish-officers to the place of her own settlement, being unmarried, and pregnant, and in danger of burdening us with another child.

At length the expected message arrived. For some reason or other, which I now forget, it was not in my power to obey it; but I gave the proper directions and explanations to my curate, who went to her accordingly without delay. It seemed by his report that she was much disappointed at seeing *him* instead of *me*, and that she would scarcely permit him to perform his duties; whether it were, that having become familiar with my manner of talking to the sick, and attached to me through gratitude, she wished for my attendance in her last moments, which she supposed to be now near at hand; or perhaps from a less worthy motive; that of obtaining pecuniary aid. To many of the sick, I believe, this was the sole motive of their sending for me. I was rich, and had besides the entire disposal of the Sacrament-money, and other funds for

charitable purposes; and it was my injunction to my curates, not to give any thing out of their own pockets, but, like the Deacons of old, to report to the Rector all the cases of distress, which seemed to demand his interference. I was therefore the only immediate giver to be certainly depended upon; and in consequence I was the person always sent for by the poor. However, in old Mrs. Barton's case, the other motive had probably no little influence; and I was disposed to consider the matter in that light, and to give her credit for right feeling. I went therefore to her on the following day; and I must do her the justice to say, that although my pecuniary assistance was but small, she never once, during a very long illness, applied to the parish for further relief.

On my way I called upon the apothecary, who told me that her disorder was a general breaking up of the constitution, and that he could do nothing for her by medicine but procure her perhaps a little sleep and freedom from pain. The pain at first was chiefly in her bowels, and was no doubt very severe; for I found her doubled down in her bed, and uttering most piteous groans. She observed me however as I entered; but after a single glance, without any attempt to speak, with quivering lips, she gave herself up again to her own sorrows.

Her Prayer-book was lying on the bed by her side; I took it into my hands, and knelt down. I was accompanied by four of my children, two girls and two boys. It was the first time that any of them had been with me on such an errand, and it had not occurred to me to give them directions with regard to their behaviour. In a moment, without hesitation, without looking for clean places, when they saw me kneel they knelt also themselves on the dirty floor around the sick bed; and the boys, being the youngest, put up their little hands, closed together, in the attitude of prayer. Tears came into my eyes, and my utterance was stopped. The sight was beautiful and touching in the extreme; a most interesting and striking subject for the study of a painter. The least of the boys indeed, with his light auburn hair hanging in natural curls about his face, was an exact living copy of one of those little cherubs, whom the great painters have so commonly placed around the death-beds of their saints.

The sick woman saw them; for an instant she forgot her pain; raising her head and clasping her hands, she exclaimed, "Oh, Sir, what a sight! What pretty, what heavenly creatures are these!" She was wrapt into the blissful realms above? or thought, I believe, that these were God's messengers sent to conduct her thither. "Remember," I said, "remember, my good Mrs. Barton, how our great Master told us, that we must all become like little children, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven. Their innocence and simplicity, their modesty, humility, and teachableness of dispo-

sition; their ready and cheerful obedience to their parents and instructors; are qualities and virtues indeed, which cannot but be highly acceptable in God's sight; and none, who possess them, and apply them, to the knowledge and practice of the Gospel, *can* be far from his kingdom. But alas! to become like little children, we that are come to this age must undo much that has been done; we must be made, as it were, afresh; we must be renewed in the spirit of our minds; we must become by daily sincere repentance new creatures; and then perhaps *our* angels, like the angels of these little ones, (whatever *that* may mean; but something supremely good it *must* mean,) will behold the face of our heavenly Father."

"Ah! Sir," she replied with difficulty, "I wish indeed that I were one of *them* in innocence, or in God's favour; and *then* that the Lord himself would take me! But, pray for me, Sir; pray for me! I can follow you, I hope, in the midst of all this agony; but I cannot speak." "I will pray for you," I said, "that you may be made perfect by your sufferings. It was so with Christ himself. Such is God's intention with respect to *you*. He loves you, and would purge you in this manner, as you know very well, from all the sin that still clings to you; and thus he would raise your thoughts from the cares and troubles of this earth to the peace and joy of heaven."

She acquiesced in silence, and stifled her moanings to hear me the better. I read the parts of the exhortation which accorded with what I had said, and which suited her present condition. I then occupied myself with the Psalms for about ten minutes; and lastly, I repeated the prayer which follows the absolution. This being done, I gave her the blessing, and rose and departed with my children. She was quite incapable of joining in conversation; but I had no doubt that her sickness would be a lingering one, and that favourable moments might present themselves for saying all that her situation required.

So it happened by God's blessing. At my next visit she was sitting up in her bed, and was entirely free from pain. And such was her condition, fluctuating between these two extremes; for the space of three months. One day she was in violent agonies, and sometimes even wrapped up in the blanket and without spirit to behold my face; another day she was quite at ease, and cheerful; but meanwhile she became weaker and weaker, and she never quitted her bed. On the present occasion she entered into free conversation about her family, being naturally communicative, when able to talk, and now particularly urged to be so by the recent committal of one of her youngest sons to prison on a charge of robbery.

"Ah! Sir," she said, "it is not old age that kills me; it is disease brought on by grief; the evil courses and the deaths of my chil-

dren are bringing me fast to my grave. I know too well, Sir, that we are called the worst family in the parish; and truly I cannot deny that there is reason for calling us so. I hoped indeed since the death of poor Richard, (God rest his soul!) that we were going on better: but now Thomas is accused of robbing his master. And I fear, Sir, it is too true. However he is shut up in prison, and must abide his trial, and meanwhile the whole parish cries out against the Bartons. This cuts me to the heart. Ah! Sir, my poor sons would never be content with the common wages and regular labour, like their old father. Jobbing brings in more money for the time; but then when the job is over and money plentiful, they are tempted to be idle and go to the ale-house, and so they spend their money sooner than they got it; and perhaps there is no other job ready to their hand, when their money is gone; and thus they are poorer in the end than the poorest day labourer, with ever so small regular wages. And what comes next? Why, they run up a score at the ale-house, and wherever else they can get tick. Then, seeing no chance of paying their debts by honest means, they fall to gambling, and at last to pilfering and stealing; so they come into trouble indeed. And if they have children to support, the misery is ten times greater. Ah! Sir, I have said all this over and over again to my sons, 'till I have tired both myself and *them* with saying it; and when poor Richard was lying on his death-bed, 'now,' said I, 'you can understand; now tell me whether it was not all true that I said to you so often, and to which you would never hearken; no, nor to your sister Mary, when she was dying, and told you the same.' 'Yes,' said the poor fellow, shaking his head, 'Yes, mother, it is all true; but it is over with me now; speak to the rest of them; for I cannot.'"

Here she stopped to wipe away the tears which were dropping on her cheeks; and I took advantage of the pause to remind William Barton's wife, whom I generally found in attendance upon her old mother-in-law, that *she* too had a large family; and that she now heard what would be their destruction, and her own ultimate sorrow, (from an aged experienced person who knew it too well,) if she did not bring them up in different courses. "Yes, Sir," she replied; I know it too well myself; but God is my witness, I cannot help it; and what will become of us all, he only can tell." "It is very lamentable," I said, "indeed; for in the natural order of things, evil must follow such a system of bringing up your children, or rather such a total neglect of all system. You cannot expect that God should work miracles to save *your* family from ruin. Cannot you send them to school?"

"They will not go, Sir," she answered; "and if I correct them for refusing, I gain the ill will of my husband; and so they run about all day in the lanes and fields; and pick up the worst play-

mates; and learn to swear, and plenty of bad tricks besides. Ignorant and idle they are, and will be, and *must* be, Sir, unless by God's will things are greatly changed." "You come," I said, "yourself, now and then to church. Could you not bring your elder children with you?" "No, Sir," she replied; "they are bare-legged, and bare-footed, and ragged all over; they would disgrace the church by being seen there. It is hard work to get any thing decent for myself to appear in. My husband brings me home but little money. I go out to wash three times a week regularly, and at other times on particular occasions. This is our main dependance. But whilst I am absent, the children are left to themselves; the biggest nurse the least, and all get into mischief together. It was but the other day, that my biggest girl laid down the infant in the road, whilst she scrambled into the hedges to look for a bird's nest; and if it had not been for a neighbour, who came by just in the nick of time, the poor child crawling about in the mud would have been stifled to death. What to do I know not."

"Pray, my good woman," I said, "as your children go to no school, do you try to teach them any thing at home? Have you any cards with letters upon them; or spelling books; or little histories from the Bible, to instruct or amuse them? Do *you* or your husband, ever read the Bible to them in the evening?" "God bless you! Sir," she answered immediately; "my husband cannot read at all; nor I well enough for children to understand me." "So then," I said, "they are growing up without any instruction whatever, as far as appears at present. Have you taught them to know that there is a God, and to pray to him?" "Ah! Sir," she replied, "I have tried to do it; but it is of no use. I go out to my work in the middle of the night; so that I am not by, to make them pray when they get up. I come home in the middle of the day to cook a bit of dinner for us all, and I hurry back again. I return at night when they are gone to bed. For their breakfast and suppers they go to the cupboard themselves, when my husband is not within. On the days that I have no work, here is my poor mother to be waited upon; and sometimes I sit up with her the night. If at home, I have the house to clean; all the necessaries to buy; and to mend and patch our rags. Ah! Sir, I have no heart to set about a thing which I understand so little."

The tears came into her eyes, as she finished her sentence. "Your case," I said, "is very deplorable, most certainly; but every thing which you mention shows more and more the absolute necessity of sending your children to my schools. That measure alone would at once do away with half your difficulties and miseries. Instead of wandering about you know not where, they would be in a safe place. Instead of being ragged for ever, they would in time, if well behaved, be decently clothed. Your boy,

you may remember, who was only a few months at school, got shoes and stockings. Instead of being wild, like an ass's colt, they would learn something of manners. Instead of being utterly ignorant, they would be taught to read and write, and would hear of their Maker and Redeemer; and worship their God on his holy Sabbaths, in his holy place; and become acquainted with all their duties to God and man. And who knows, but that in a short time, by God's help, they might be able to read their Bibles to *you* and your husband in the evenings, when your work is over, or on the Sundays, when you have none? Many children have done, and do this continually; and at length have made Christians of their parents, who were no better than Heathens before. Would not this be a most delightful event for a mother to think upon? Does not your heart yearn towards your own offspring, whom you bore in your bosom, and nourished from your breast? And remember what your blessed Saviour said, when his disciples would have kept the little children from him: 'Suffer them to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.' Pray, pray, pray, my good woman, do not you yourself, their mother, cause them to belong to the kingdom of the devil!"

She was overcome, and sobbed aloud. I continued. "But your husband, you tell me, does not second your endeavours. I wish I could see him, so as to be able to talk to him. You know very well, that I have never found him at home, except once, when you were all at dinner. I dare say that I speak within compass, when I assert, that I have been fifty times at your house without meeting with him." "It is very true, Sir," she answered; "and it is a great pity; and I understand clearly, that you could not stop him in the street, and have time there to talk to him on such a subject as this." "No," I said; "it would require an hour to do it properly, and so as to have the best chance of persuading him. I fear, indeed, that there is one of the greatest difficulties to be overcome, namely, to convince him first, that his own mode of life is ill chosen and most wretched; miserable here, and leading to intolerable misery hereafter. If he thinks his own life a happy one, then he will wish his children to follow his steps; if we could make him think otherwise, I hope that he loves his children well enough not to desire to see them unhappy, or in poverty, wickedness, and disgrace. And it seems surprising to *me*, that his own history, and the history of his poor sister and brother, who are gone, and the present circumstances of those who are alive, and the warnings of the dead and the dying, and the counsels of his aged mother, who lies here under God's hand, have not already convinced him, that true happiness is to be found only in the paths of religion and virtue. But you must try again; and I too will try, if I can get opportunities; and *you*, my poor old friend," I said, turning to the sick wo-

man, "*you* also must try once more, whether, when you are about to quit him for ever, he will be more disposed to obey you, than in the days of your health and strength."

During this conversation I had observed that old Mrs. Barton was variously affected, but that her countenance scarcely ever ceased to betray the inward feelings of self-accusation and remorse. How could it indeed escape her, when she was now examining her past life with more accuracy and strictness, and when to make excuses was of no avail; how must it not have preyed upon her spirits, when she was going to give an account of her conduct to one who knew precisely what it had been; that the very miseries, which we were all of us so desirous to correct, had been occasioned, in a great degree, by her own neglect of her children in their youth? Her answer to my recommendation partook of these feelings. "Ah! Sir," she said, "I am bound in every way to do what you desire. Am not I his mother? Are not the children my grand-children? But still more; have not I, by my bad management, a great many years ago, been the cause of this evil? God forgive me! Certainly, Sir; I will try once more for my own sake, and for theirs; for my own, that I may make some amends, if possible, for my former errors; for theirs, because though I am myself now called away from this world, I am anxious for *their* condition in it, and that we may meet again in the next. Oh! pray for us, Sir; pray for us all; may God have mercy upon us! and may Jesus Christ have mercy upon us!

Being thus invited, I knelt down without any further remark, and read the Collects for the first and fourth Sundays after the Epiphany, for the second Sunday in Advent and for the fourth and fifth Sundays after Easter, and lastly for the seventh Sunday after Trinity; then giving them the benediction, I left them.

The immediate consequences of this conversation were good. Without my seeing him, William Barton sent three of his children to the schools. They told him, it seems, as much as they could recollect of what I had said; and, I believe, they hinted besides, that he must never expect any assistance from *me*, in the troubles that might befall him, if he suffered his children to grow up like drabs and vagabonds. And this argument had probably some weight with him. I had not commissioned them to use it in the present case; but it was becoming pretty generally known, that in the select vestry I discouraged the applications of all such persons, and made great difficulties about relieving them out of my private funds.

It is not my intention to record all that passed between myself and Mrs. Barton, in the numerous visits which I made to her cottage, during so protracted a sickness. Much of it was precisely the same as occurred in a hundred other cases. It struck me more and more with surprise, when I thought of it, which I did frequently, that in attending upon the daughter and the son, as I have already

mentioned, and now the old mother, I had not once met with the father of the family; and I had reason to suppose, that in some way or other he knew of my approach, and always contrived to escape before I reached the door. In his present dwelling indeed I could easily account for the one and the other. It had two doors on opposite sides, and a window near to each door; and on one side there was a narrow foot-path, between two hedges, long and straight, leading directly to the window on that side. This foot-path, after winding round the end of the cottage, went off on the other side in a straight direction also, but not visible at so great a distance on account of some other cottages which had lately sprung up and contracted the view. However, on which ever side I might happen to approach, he might see me for a longer or shorter period, and have abundance of time to get away, if he chose it. And this, it seems probable, he must have done frequently; whether it were, that a person of his description had some vague undefined alarm with respect to a minister of religion, or that he had no wish at all to engage in any religious act, or that he was quite ignorant of religion itself.

After missing him so often then, I was equally surprised at last to catch him. He had not kept a vigilant look out, and thus was taken. That he did not court a meeting with me was evident, because, the moment I unexpectedly entered, he began to bustle about, and to sidle off towards the open door. But I laid my hand upon him, and put him under arrest; and "whither away so fast?" I said: "we must become acquainted with each other, John. I have been a long time without seeing you; and you are getting old, very old. A little talk with *me* now and then may be of use to you, John. Besides, I am come here to pray with your poor wife; and why should you go away without joining with us?"

By the time that I had spoken so far, he had taken off his hat, and made up his mind to stay; but he looked stupid, and said nothing. Then, remembering that beautiful speech which Homer puts into the mouth of Nestor's youngest son, upon the arrival of Telemachus at Pylus in the midst of a sacrifice, I continued thus. "You pray sometimes, I presume, to the great God above us, who made and governs the world; for it would be strange indeed, if, in so long a life, and with those grey hairs, you had not yet discovered that you stand in need of his help and favour. Ah! John, John, there is not a man upon earth who could exist for a moment without his providence."

The ignorant old man seemed quite bewildered; I therefore put the question to him plainly and directly, "Do you ever pray to God?" "Yes, Sir; Oh! yes;" he replied; "I pray to him, when I have time." "Then pray to him now," I said, "or listen to *me*, whilst *I* pray. Will you ever have a better opportunity, or great-

er cause? Is not your poor wife here, the very stay of your life? What will become of you, if God should take her away from you? The old man was moved a little, and answered, "I hope, Sir, I shall go first; for without her my life would be very lone and unked." "Is not this then," I asked, "sufficient reason for praying to God, and desiring him to spare her to you; or, if he see fit to take her, that he would enable you to bear her loss?" "To be sure it is," he replied. "Kneel down then," I said, "and whilst I open the Prayer-Book, think of some of your most pressing wants, that God only can relieve; think how great and good a being God is; think how you yourself have offended him by your numerous sins; by despising his holy Sabbaths; by the neglect of public worship and private prayer. What will be your lot in the next world, unless God be gracious to you beyond what you deserve; beyond what you appear even to desire! Have you ever heard that after your death you will rise again to life, and be tried by a just impartial Judge, who will sentence you to everlasting fire, if you shall have gone out of this world without repentance, and without making your peace with God through Jesus Christ?"

"I have heard it all," was his answer; "my wife there has told me." "Then you know very well," I said, "what to pray for; and these things should never be out of your head, even whilst you are hedging and ditching, or whatever daily labour you are about. But now kneel down." He was preparing to lean with his knees against a chair. "No, no!" I said, "*that* will never do. You have the greatest things to ask for, that man ever had; and will God hear you, do you think, and grant your prayers, if you pray to him in such a posture as that?" The poor old man now went down upon his knees on the floor.

This happened to be a day on which Mrs. Barton was in a great agony of pain; so I read without much alteration the whole of the prayer for a sick person when there appeareth small hope of recovery. She joined in it with fervency, and seemed to derive wonderful comfort from the sight of her husband thus humbling himself before his Maker in the act of prayer. To read so as to be heard and understood by the old man, required great exertion, and was very fatiguing. For this reason therefore, and for others, I read but little. It was a rule with me never, if possible, to omit the Lord's Prayer. I read it now, and afterwards a few sentences out of the Visitation Psalm, altered, and shortened, or enlarged, so as to touch both their cases in the following manner.

"O Lord God Almighty, incline thine ear unto us, and save us! Cast us not away in the time of age, when we are grey-headed; forsake us not, when our strength faileth us! Through *thee* have we been holden up ever since we were born; thou art *he* that took us out of our mother's womb; be thou our strong hold, whereunto we

may always fly! O God, go not thou far from us! O God, haste thee to help us! Who is like unto *thee*? As for *us*, our hope and trust is in thee; we will patiently abide alway, and praise thee more and more."

After this I concluded with the benediction of St. Paul; and upon departing I besought the old man, now that he had happily begun this great duty of prayer, never to omit it morning, noon, or night; not to pray only when he appeared to have nothing else to do, but to borrow time for it from other things; and to kneel sometimes at the bed of his sick wife, and to pray there. "*Your death-bed,*" I said, must now be near at hand; *your clock* must now be nearly run down." The striking of the clock at that instant suggested the image to my mind. "It is fit that you should be ready to meet your great Master, who will call you so soon, and reckon with you. What a fearful thing it will be for you to fall into the hands of an offended Almighty God! Try therefore to make your peace with him, before you go hence, and be no more seen. His Son, Jesus Christ, died for you, to enable you to do this. Plead therefore his merits without delay, and entreat God to send his Holy Spirit to dwell in you; to cleanse you from all sin; and to put good thoughts and desires into your heart."

So I finished, and left them. At the next visit he was there again; whether voluntarily or not, I cannot tell; but he was sitting, and made no attempt to go away as before. His face indeed seemed very sorrowful; and his wife said almost immediately, "My poor old man, Sir, has got a cold to-day, and has lost his appetite, and is quite unked like." It was noon, and I inquired if he had been at work that morning; and finding that he had, I said to him, "You had better stay at home this afternoon, and take care of your cold; and then, by God's blessing, you may be well again to-morrow." "No, no, Sir," he answered, "I have a hedge and ditch to finish; and I am not so bad yet as not to go on with my work." "Very well then," I said, "we will kneel together, and pray with your wife, and ask God's blessing for *you* and for *her*; and thank him for giving her so much ease to day." She had enjoyed a quiet night, and seemed much refreshed by it.

I selected the 34th Psalm, and adapted it to my purpose. I then read the Lord's Prayer, the two prayers at the end of the Litany, with slight alterations, and the benediction at the end of the Visitation-service, addressing it to them both. After this he seemed to be in a hurry to go out to his work, as if late, and beyond his time; so I took my leave without any further observation.

Very early the next morning I received a message to entreat me to come to him immediately, as he was supposed to be at the point of death. Some business, however, which could not be put off, having detained me longer than I could have wished, I did not ar-

rive at the cottage until an hour after the time when I was expected. Upon entering I looked round for him; thinking that I should probably have seen him in the same bed with his wife. She told me that he was up stairs, and that the doctor had said there was no hope of his recovery. The seizure was in his bowels. I hastened to go to him; and as I went, she reminded me how little he knew. "Yes," I said, "and he is so deaf too." "Aye, indeed," she replied; "God help him!"

I mounted the stairs without any expectation of being able to be useful to this poor man. I found him quite alone, sitting upright in his bed; but I was followed almost immediately by two women, who knelt at once by the bed-side. He looked certainly like a man who had suffered racking pain for some hours; but I saw no appearances of death about him, and he was sitting up without any support. However, after what I had heard, I treated him as a dying man.

He seemed glad to see me; and I touched his hand, and said, putting my mouth close to his ear, "I hope, my poor old friend, that your pains are not so great as to prevent you from praying to your God and your Saviour, to help you in this last journey which you are going to take, and to bring you into the happy place." "I am very bad, Sir, indeed," he answered; "but I could pray, if I knew how."

One of the women here told me that his deafness was surprisingly abated, and I soon found it to be the fact; so that I was happily not under the necessity of straining my voice to its utmost pitch, to cause him to hear me. This was a providential event, and I said, "God is very good to you in enabling you to hear me so easily at this awful moment." "Yes, Sir," he replied; "I hear all they say now. My hearing came back to me about an hour ago." "Well," I said, "thank God for it! For you may prepare yourself the better to meet him. I can say more to you now than I could otherwise have done, if you had remained deaf; and also these good women may read to you out of the Bible, and other good books, a little at a time to instruct and to comfort you. Do you think that you shall have strength enough to get over this disorder?"

"No, no, Sir," he answered, shaking his head; "I shall never get over it. My wife expected to go first; but I shall go before her, and very soon." "Do you know," I inquired, "how long that other world is to be, into which you are now going so fast?" "Yes, Sir," was his answer; "my wife read it to me, out of a little book of yours, that the next world was never to come to any end." "And," I inquired again, "did she read to you also, that in the other world there was to be the greatest happiness in heaven for all good Christians, and the most dreadful misery in hell-fire for all bad Christians, and these too for ever?" "Yes, Sir," was his reply,

"she did." "Which then," I inquired still further, "do you wish for yourself? To be happy without end, or to be punished without end?" "You need not ask me such a question as *that*, Sir; I am no scholar, but I am not a fool."

I was glad to hear him speak thus, and with some degree of warmth, for a man apparently so ignorant and listless; so I said, "I did not ask you the question, because I had any doubt whether you liked happiness or punishment most; but to rouse your attention to those things, and to fix your mind upon them. Have you done, or are you doing so?" "Ah! Sir," he replied, "it is a heavy concern." "It is indeed," I continued; "the very heaviest concern that any man can have; whether that man be a king, or a beggar; whether he be young, or old; whether he be in good health, or on his death-bed, as you think yourself now to be. It is the heaviest concern for all men, in all situations; but to a dying man it may appear to be a much heavier concern than to others. They may put off the thinking about it, if they will; but a dying man cannot put it off any longer, if he wish at all to save his soul. You tell me that you do so wish; for to be happy instead of being miserable for ever, and to save your own soul, mean the same thing. What are you doing then, to make this heavy concern turn out well? You told me, that you could pray to God, in spite of your pain, if you knew how. Do you confess yourself to be a sinner?"

"To be sure I do, Sir," he answered; "but there are many worse." "Very likely," I said; "but how will *that* help *you*? Think no more about it, I beg of you; it does not signify to *you* two farthings, two straws even, what other people may be. They must give an account for themselves; and you must give an account for *yourself*. You allow that you are a sinner; think of *that* only; *that* is quite enough for you to make you tremble and fear what may become of you, when you die. For no sinner, continuing to be a sinner, wilfully, and without repentance, can possibly be saved. If you know this then, do you not know what to pray for? And cannot you also find out how to pray? Cannot you raise up your eyes towards heaven, and clasp your hands together, and cry out, O Lord God, be merciful, I beseech thee, to *me* a sinner!" "Yes," he replied, "I could do *that*, and heartily too, if *that* were all, and if *that* might save me." "I cannot tell you," I said, "what may possibly be enough to save your soul; but as you know yourself to be a sinner, you may be sure that it must be proper and right for you to ask God to have mercy upon you." "Why yes, to be sure," he answered, "so it must; and I will do what you have taught me directly." Then looking upwards, and clasping his hands, he exclaimed, not without feeling, "God have mercy upon me, and save me; for I am a sinner!"

I was affected and pleased. A little light had been shed upon the

darkness of this poor old man's understanding, his heart had been touched with the sense of one great want at the least; and he had prayed with some earnestness to have that want supplied. I beheld him with compassion, and I determined to use my best endeavours to carry him still further. So I said; "I am delighted to hear you pray in that manner; and, if you were no better informed, thus you might go on to pray, till death close your eyes, and stiffen your hands, and put your tongue to silence. But suppose God should say, 'you are convicted out of your own mouth of being a sinner; of having broken my laws; why should I have mercy upon your soul? Have I not told you in my Bible, and you might have heard it at my Church, the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die? Must I pardon you now, upon your death-bed, for a whole life of sin, and disobedience to my commands, merely because you ask me to pardon you, and because you feel perhaps great fear for the future, and some sorrow for the past?' What reason can you give? Would it be just? Would it be wise? If God should talk to you in this manner, how would you answer him?"

The poor old man, beginning to be penitent, was cast down immediately, and said, "I could not answer him at all. Teach me, Sir, if there be any way of doing it. I can never find it out myself." "*That* I will, my poor old friend," I replied; "for I am pleased to hear you say, that you wish to be taught. You feel as you ought to feel; you are sorry to be so ignorant, at such a time, when you have so heavy a concern upon your hands; this is a right disposition, with which God himself will be pleased too; for he loves the humble, the contrite, the poor in spirit."

His woful face, wrinkled with age, and pain, and care, was smoothed and brightened a little, and his troubled mind somewhat eased and elevated, as I thought, by this little tribute of praise. The manner in which he looked up towards me, as I stood over his bed, was very touching and piteous; and I thought the time was come when I might preach Christ to him with success.

I said therefore, "You want to know what right you have to expect God's forgiveness. I will tell you. In yourself you have no right at all, nor the shadow of a claim to such a blessing; but you have a great and powerful friend, who sits at God's right hand; who is God's own dearly beloved Son; the same who came down from heaven into this lower world, and whilst he was here was called Jesus Christ; he is continually asking his Father to forgive sinners; and his Father has promised to do it, if they pray for pardon in his Son's name, and put their whole faith and trust in him, and are heartily sorry for all their misdoings. And there is no wonder that God the Father should make such a promise to God the Son, who is Jesus Christ. For, when God the Father was about to punish sinners in the most terrible manner for dishonouring his holy

Sabbaths, and breaking his most excellent commandments, his Son, Jesus Christ, undertook to suffer punishment in their stead, if his Father would be so gracious as to spare them. Accordingly he became man 1800 years ago, and, after he had taught and done here on earth the most wonderful things, which showed him to have the power of God, he was seized by wicked blood-thirsty men, and nailed through his hands and feet to two great beams of wood, in the form of a cross, and thus he died by a lingering death, in the utmost agonies of pain. Is not this now a most astonishing thing, that the Son of God should have made himself like one of *us*, and should have suffered so much sorrow, and should have undergone that cruel, shameful, and accursed death on the cross, to save wretched sinners from the lake that burns with everlasting fire and brimstone? Does it not show you how much he pitied them? Does it not assure you, that he will do whatever else is needful for their good, if they love him, and obey him?

“Besides, he has told us so himself, in the book called the Gospel, in which the history of him is written. There he says, that he came to call sinners to repentance, and that no man who comes to him shall by any means be cast out; but that he will pray to his Father for them, and will raise them up from their graves, as he raised himself, and will carry them with him to heaven. Now then, my poor old friend, you understand, I hope, that when you say, God be merciful to *me* a sinner, you should add, for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son, who died to save sinners, and me amongst the rest. This should be the form of your prayer: ‘O God, I do not ask thee to be merciful to me on account of any merit or deserts of my own, but for the vast and wonderful merits of Jesus Christ. I do not ask it of thee, because I am sorry for my past sins, and repent of them, and resolve to forsake all sin for the rest of my life; but because Jesus Christ has suffered the punishment due to sin in his own person, and has made satisfaction for it. It is in this that I place all my trust. Yet I will repent to the best in my power.’ Thus you should pray, and on this ground you may hope to be forgiven. For now, you see, how God may pardon sin, and yet be just; his justice was fully satisfied by Christ’s sufferings. Now you see again, how God may pardon sin, and yet be wise; his infinite wisdom indeed found out this only method, whereby to pardon the sinner without encouraging sin itself; and whereby to urge him to repent, by the strongest motives of fear, and love, and gratitude, and hope, and trust. Do you understand what I say to you?”

“Not all, Sir,” he answered; “no, I cannot pretend that I do.”
“But,” said I, “you understand, so far, I suppose, that whatever you pray for, you must pray for in the name of Jesus Christ.”
“Yes,” he replied; “I understand *that* very well, and something of the reason why.” “The reason,” I said, “to put it very short-

ly, is no other than this; Jesus Christ made an agreement with God to save sinners; sinners can only be saved by *that* agreement; to *that* alone therefore must they look, and *that* alone must they plead, when they pray for pardon; and when they ask it for Jesus Christ's sake, they remind God of *that* agreement, and show that they trust in nothing else. So much I think you understand; and when you turn it over in your thoughts, you will know, I am sure, not only for what to pray, but also how to do it." "I shall indeed," said the sick man, "a great deal better than ever I knew before." "Well then," I said, "here we will stop talking for the present, lest it should be too much for your strength; and I will kneel down and pray by you." "Thank you, Sir," was his answer; "if you please."

Having knelt down, I first selected such sentences from the Confessions, as I thought most likely to come home to him; and I desired him to repeat them after me aloud, or to think of them silently in his own mind, so as to see that they applied to himself. He did not follow me aloud, but seemed to be fully sensible of the general meaning of the thing. I then rose and pronounced the Absolution, from the Communion-service. After which I read the Lord's Prayer, and the blessing, and thus left him.

Being come down stairs into the room below, where his wife was lying, I said to her, "Your poor husband is in a much more favourable state than I could have imagined to be likely. I feared that he would have been now, as he has appeared to me to be for so many years, quite listless and indifferent about God, his Saviour, and religion altogether. But he is not so; he is humble and teachable; he confesses that he is a sinner, and consequently that he deserves punishment; and he desires to learn how he may obtain forgiveness, escape that punishment, and be happy for ever in the next world. So far I have instructed him; and he can now pray with understanding, when he prays in the name of Jesus Christ. He knows what Jesus Christ has done for him; and why he did it; and that God, who is perfectly wise and just, and who therefore cannot act so as to encourage sin, or suffer his laws to be broken without punishment, may now for Christ's sake pardon sinners, if they repent with sincerity, and believe in their Saviour, and depend entirely upon the covenant which he sealed for them with his blood. I have not used these words exactly to your husband, but other plainer ones, the meaning of which he seemed at last to comprehend. But what do you think yourself of this matter? Did *he* wish to see me, or was it *you* that sent for me?"

"Oh, Sir," she answered, "he was very desirous indeed to see you; and he would have sent to you in the middle of the night, if we would have let him. And when we did send to you, and you could not come immediately, he was sadly disappointed, and grew

very impatient, and cried out over and over again. 'The man will never come! the man will never come! I shall be dead without seeing him, and without a prayer!' " "I am truly glad," I said, "to hear all this. His heart is changed undoubtedly; God has taken away the hard stone out of it. Who knows but that he may be still further gracious; and, though your poor old man has only begun to work at the end of a long day, that out of his great bounty he may bestow some reward upon him? Do you remember the parable of the labourers in the vineyard?"

"That I do, Sir, very well," she replied eagerly; "and it has always been a great comfort to me; and I hope that my husband and myself shall get the penny from a bountiful Lord and Master. Ah! Sir, if you had seen the poor old man last night, you would have felt for him almost as I did. He seemed to be sure that his hour was fast coming. For he looked at me, with his eyes fixed steadily upon me, for two or three minutes; and when at last he put his foot upon the first step of the stairs, he turned round towards me and said, 'God bless you! You have been a good wife to me. God bless you! I shall never see you any more.' The Lord alone knows how this may be; but he came home from his work in the evening much worse than when you saw him in the middle of the day; and in the night, as I have told you before, he was seized with the bowel-complaint; and the doctor says it is all over with him."

She was touched with her own story, and could not proceed any further; so I endeavoured to comfort her by telling her, that I was not without great hopes with respect to his soul; and that, as I was going further on, and might come back *that way*, I would call again, and talk and pray with him a little more. She thanked me, and I departed.

Returning in about two hours, I went up to him at once. His eyes were closed, as if he were dying. A woman who was in the chamber, a sister of old Mrs. Barton's, told me that his pain was almost gone, but that his strength seemed much diminished; and that since I had left him, he had slumbered continually in the manner which I now saw. He could not eat any thing, she said, of any sort or kind. I asked her if he had ever prayed; and she informed me that he had several times opened his eyes, and that then he always moved his lips, and appeared to *her* to pray. Once she had heard him mention the name of Jesus Christ, and the word, sinner.

At this moment he opened his eyes again, and saw me; and he desired to be lifted up in his bed, as he had been before, when I talked with him; but his deafness was not now such, as to make it necessary for me to be close to his ear. I and the woman raised him up into the posture which he wished; and then I sent her

down stairs, that, if necessary, I might speak to him with the most perfect freedom.

A chair had been placed for me by the bed-side; on which I sat down, and began to question him in the following manner. "Do you remember what I said to you, when I was here two hours ago?" "Yes, Sir," he answered; "most of it." "Have you been thinking about it, whilst I was away?" I have thought of nothing else at all," he replied. "You are in the right. Can any thing be more worth thinking about, than the saving of your soul?" "No indeed," he said; "nothing, Sir." "And have you prayed to God to save it?" "Yes," he answered; "over and over." "For whose sake?" "For Jesus Christ's," he replied. "What then? You put no trust in yourself?" "No indeed," he said; "I stick to the agreement, as you taught me, Sir." "Very well," I continued. "You have had many an agreement, have you not, with different masters here on earth?" "Yes," he answered; "I have worked for a great many." "And you always abided by your agreement, and knew that it would be of no use to talk to your masters about any thing else; did you not?" "Very true, Sir," he replied; "it was just so."

"Well then; a part of the agreement which Christ made with God was, that the sinner should be penitent. Do you remember that?" "Yes, Sir," he said; "I do; and I try all I can to be penitent myself." I was glad to observe that he outstripped the order of my questions, and anticipated what was to follow. It proved that he applied every thing to his own case. I proceeded thus.

"The true penitent thinks over the actions of his life; he marks, what things he has done, which he ought not to have done; and what things he has left undone, which he ought to have done; he is sorrowful and ashamed, and angry with himself, that he should have lived in such a manner, and that he should have broken so many of God's laws; he resolves to lead a new and a better life, if God might suffer him to live any longer; and all this time he prays without ceasing, that he may be forgiven, solely and wholly on account of Jesus Christ, in whose death and merits he puts a firm trust and confidence. Are *you*, my poor old friend, a penitent of this sort?"

"Ah! God help me, Sir," he said; "I cannot do all that." "Well, but you think of some of the wrong things that you did continually, do you not? How you used to curse and swear, for instance? Do you think of that?" "Yes," he replied; "I did curse and swear, to be sure; but I did not mean much harm by it." "No? not much harm by it? Why when you had a quarrel with any body; with your poor wife, who is going like yourself to stand before her Judge; with your children; or your neighbours; and you damned all their limbs, and even their souls; (I almost tremble whilst I repeat

such horrible expressions) did not you mean to wish them some great harm? The words in their simple sense mean the greatest harm that can possibly happen to any man; great indeed beyond all possible imagination. To damn a man's soul is to wish that it may be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, there to burn for ever with the devil and his wicked angels."

"Ah! Sir," he answered; "I did not know *that*; I never was taught to read; I was very ignorant. God forgive me! I am sorry for it now; and I hope I have left it off. And if God would but let me stay here a little while longer, I could repent better of my other faults."

This poor old man seemed to improve at every step; and became now a hopeful and an interesting patient; so I ventured to commend him, and said, "God will be pleased with that wish of yours, because it comes, I believe, from your heart; and if so, he will either grant it, or enable you to do without it. But I will go on to help you with your examination of yourself, that your repentance may be the more perfect, and the more pleasing to God. One of his commandments says, 'thou shalt not steal.' Were you acquainted with it?"

"I cannot deny but I was," said the old man; and he trembled. "Can you lay your hand upon your heart," I inquired, "and tell me, now that you are a dying man, that you never broke that commandment?" "I will say no such thing," he replied; "I should be a liar, if I did. But I did not steal, Sir, like many do. Some of my masters, I am sure, will give me a good character. Ask *them*." "Yes, my poor friend," I said; "some men may give you a good character, because they know little about you, or because they desire to do you a kindness. But all you want now is a good character with God, who knows every thing about you; even those actions that were never seen by any human eye; and who has no respect of persons, and cannot be partial to any man, without reason, or justice; and who is besides so thoroughly pure and holy, as to hate and abominate the very least dishonesty in the world. Can you stand before *him*, and think to deceive him, and to prevail over him, by pleading that you did not steal like many do?"

The old man trembled more and more, and said, "Ah! Sir, I have been worse than I was willing to think; but I will hide nothing." "You cannot," I answered immediately. "From *me* you may; from God you cannot. Confess every thing to *him* in your thoughts, which indeed he knows already; but he is pleased with the confessions of a sinner; and the more particular the confession is, the better. But, I fear, my poor old man, from what I have heard, when you come to think strictly about it, as a dying man should do, you will find your sins of this sort to be more in number than the very hairs of your head, and quite impossible to

be reckoned up, If you have committed great thefts; such as the stealing of sheep and things of that value, I suppose that you could never forget them; but what *you* perhaps would call little thefts, or no thefts at all; which the righteous God however will utterly condemn; these may have been so numerous and so little regarded at the time, as to have now quite slipped out of your memory. But it is not so with God. He noted it down in his book, whenever you robbed your neighbour's garden, or hen-roost; nay, whenever you tore a stake out of his hedge, or a rail from his paling."

"The Lord have mercy upon me!" cried out the old man, still more alarmed. "I never understood this, Sir; and I hope God will not be hard with me, ignorant as I was." "For Christ's sake," I said, "God will certainly deal mercifully with you, provided you are penitent; and it is to make you truly so, that I mention all these things to you. You, it seems, would have passed them over without repentance; and then you would have been charged with them, to your great surprise and dismay, in the terrible hour of judgment. And now perhaps I ought to go on to other things; but, I hope, you will be able, by this example that I have given you, to search all your conduct to the very bottom; and to accuse, and condemn yourself for your own faults; that God, seeing how severe you are against yourself, may pity, pardon, and save you. And, whilst you search your conduct, be sure not to forget the things undone, as well as the things done; more especially how you have lived to all appearance without a God in the world, never having gone to church to pray to him in public, and never or scarcely ever, having fallen on your knees at home to pray to him in private. The total neglect of your family too, in consequence of which and of your bad example, your children have grown up to be what we now see them, must make a serious, an awful part of your repentance."

"Ah! Sir," he exclaimed; "I see I have been very wicked. I never thought of this before; and now I shall have no time to repent of it as I ought. What will become of me; and what must I do?" "You can do nothing at all, I said, "by your own strength alone; but there is another, whom I have mentioned to you before, who can enable you to do every thing, even in the shortest space of time. For *his* help you must pray, whilst you can pray at all. I speak of God the Holy Ghost; whose peculiar office it is to help your infirmities, and to fill you with godly sorrow and to make you holy; and Jesus Christ has told us that his blessed Spirit will be given to those who ask for him. In short, the Bible assures us, with respect to every thing which is good for us; 'ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' Now then, my poor old friend, you know what you are to do, and I shall leave you to your own thoughts, after a single prayer.

Your disorder has reduced you too much for further conversation, or I should have talked to you about the Sacrament."

He seemed much exhausted, and made me no answer. I called up the woman; we laid him gently down on his back; and then I read the commendatory prayer lest I might not see him again, shook him by the hand, and left him with my blessing. I was late, and could not stop to speak to the old woman below. This was Saturday. To visit him on Sunday was scarcely possible. Very early on Monday morning, before I could get to him, he died.

"My poor old man is dead, Sir," said Mrs. Barton, as I entered the house. "Yes," I answered; "I heard it as I came along. God, I hope, had compassion upon him, and forgave him, and has taken him to himself. He was ignorant, very ignorant; but desirous to do what he could; and God, for Christ's sake, is merciful."

She lifted up her hands in silent prayer to that gracious Being, who spares when we deserve punishment. Having paused 'till she changed her attitude, I inquired if he had said any thing about the Sacrament. "No, Sir," she replied; "nor did he understand what it meant. After you left him he spoke very little; and scarcely ever but whilst he was praying. So my sister told me; and very glad indeed I was to hear it. Alack! Sir; he never used to pray." "I believe not," I said; "but by God's help we taught him to do it in his last days, and he did do it; and so far his spirit was renewed within him. If it had pleased the God of all mercy to give us a little more time, he might have been instructed in the nature of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and might have longed for it, and I might have administered it to him. He is gone without it; without eating of his blessed Saviour's body, and without drinking of his blood. But he knew nothing of that sacred institution, nor of the mighty benefits which it is intended to convey to the humble and faithful communicant. He could not therefore hunger and thirst after *that* of which he was uninformed. Indeed he might have been informed of it. But we must not press this matter too far; we shall soon be lost in our own reasonings. Let us leave it to God; with *him* nothing is impossible; and it is his property to forgive sins. After the best which the best of us can do we shall still be found wanting in his sight, and have need enough of forgiveness. But tell me, how do you mean to bury the corpse?"

"My sons," she said, "will do it. They promised their father that they would, when he first gave himself up; and they have promised the same to *me*, when I die;" which must soon be. God knows where the money is to come from! But it would disgrace us to be carried to our graves in a parish-coffin, and not to be taken into the church."

"Your sons will do well," I replied, "to bury you both respectably. Not that it really matters to yourselves whether your cof-

fins be worse, or better; or the funeral service shorter or longer; or whether the great, or the little bell be tolled. In a few years after the body has been committed to the ground; earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust; it will be the same with the king as with the day-labourer. Neither will all his pomp and parade carry the king to heaven; nor will the wretched poverty of the other prevent him from getting thither. Repentance towards God, and faith towards Jesus Christ, are all in all. But to your sons it *does* matter. And if they should desert the dead bodies of their parents, and leave it to the parish-officers to see them laid in their graves, it would justly stir up a general cry of shame; especially against your unmarried sons, who ought to be fully able to bear this expense. I am glad to hear that they have resolved upon it."

"Aye, Sir, they have always been kind to their poor father and mother," she said; "and always ready to share with us whatever they had. It is a pity that they have taken so bad a turn in the rest of their doings. But God be merciful to them, and bring them to repentance! I shall pray for them with my last breath." "Do so," I replied; "and the prayer of sincerity and faith may not return empty into your own bosom, but draw down from above a blessing upon your children." After this I read to her a small portion of the Psalms, the Lord's Prayer, and the Benediction; and so took my leave.

At my first visit to old Mrs. Barton after the funeral of her husband, I observed, that she was much changed for the worse, and that probably she would shortly follow him. On the same day too she was deeply dejected in her spirits, and afflicted with severe pain. Nevertheless, being quite alone, she was desirous of talking, and she asked me what I thought of the burial. "It was very proper," I answered, "and very creditable to your sons; and the behaviour of every body was as decent, and as orderly, and indeed as solemn, as could have been wished. They seemed to feel what we were about, and that their own turn might come they knew not how soon. But there was one of your younger sons, who was more affected than the rest; and his eyes were quite red with weeping." "Aye, Sir," she said, "that was John, who is just discharged from prison. He was but just in time to follow his old father to his grave."

She was now nearly past crying; but I marked a single tear in the hollow below her eye. I expressed my hope that those tears of her son might be the beginnings of a true repentance; and "*then*," I said to her, "you yourself would have to shed only tears of joy. God does not afflict us at random, but only for our good; our tears give him no pleasure, except they be tears of penitence; may your son's tears be such, and he will accept both *them* and *him*." "Ah! Sir," she answered, "I wish it may be so! But I

fear; and I am going away with sorrow in my heart about it." "Be calm," I said, "and try to compose yourself, and patiently to submit your own will to God's will. I will kneel down, and read to you, and pray with you."

I then read the latter exhortation in the Visitation-service; and, pursuing the path there pointed out, I questioned her, as to the great articles of our holy faith; all which she affirmed that she steadfastly believed; and next, with respect to her repentance; which appeared to be as full and complete as was likely for a person in her condition. "If any thing, which you have done in the course of your life," I said, "now weighs heavily upon your mind; confess it; not to *me*; unless it were for the purpose of doing justice to any injured person; but to God. Do not confess generally that you are a sinner, which is every body's case; but make a special confession; name all your weighty sins by their names, and go through all the aggravations of your guilt; say why it was particularly wrong in you to have committed them, and that other persons might have been more excusable than yourself; dwell upon all this in your secret thoughts, and humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and be your own accuser; and then if you ask for it with an earnest desire, and a true humility of spirit, I will do what I have never yet done for you; I will pronounce the absolution over you."

Upon hearing this, the poor woman, who was lying at her length in the bed, reached out her hands; and clasping them above her, with a wonderful expression of fervour and devotion; her eyes too, which were black, and yet keen and piercing, being fixed with a steadfast undeviating gaze upwards; with convulsed and quivering lips she seemed to be laying open her inmost soul to God. She was speaking rapidly, but she uttered no sounds.

The spectacle was striking in an uncommon degree. I stood in silent awe. After a few minutes exhausted by this powerful feeling she dropped her hands, and said with difficulty, "I am ready, Sir; I desire it from my heart."

Immediately I pronounced aloud the solemn form in the most solemn tone of which I was capable.

A pause ensued, but shorter than before, during which she appeared to be buried in deep thought. "This service, Sir," at length she said, "has been my constant study, since you began to attend upon my poor children and myself. I have read it over more often than I can tell you; so that I can remember every part of it; and I have observed that you never used the part which you have now read to *me*."

"It is very true," I replied; "I read it but seldom; because it will be of no benefit or true comfort, except to those who are conscious of their unworthiness, and sinking under the load of it; deeply penitent for every transgression of God's righteous laws; looking

to their Saviour alone for relief, with a perfect faith-and trust in his merits; and anxious to be delivered by him from the guilt and power of sin. When I meet with such persons, who have also more than an ordinary acquaintance with their religion, then at their own desire and for their especial comfort, I absolve them from their sins according to this form. God indeed has absolved them already in his secret counsels, and will finally make it known at the day of judgment; such is his gracious promise by the Gospel to the penitent and believing; if it were not so, what the minister does would be of no avail; he only pronounces the fact, being assured of the faithfulness of God that he has ratified it in heaven. To no others would it signify at all, except to delude them, for the minister to pronounce this form of absolution.

“Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, indeed, gave to the Apostles the power of remitting sins; and this power has come down to all Christian ministers, who have been regularly appointed to succeed the Apostles. But this power must be consistent with the terms of the Gospel itself; and therefore we do not presume to exercise it of our own will, and in a partial arbitrary manner. Nor would God above ratify our deed. It would be a great abuse of our office to do so, and might be very destructive also to the souls of men. If the sinner were not yet truly penitent, and had not yet arrived at a lively faith in Christ; and trusted nevertheless in the absolution of the minister, so far as to cast off all further care for his salvation; the consequences would be very dreadful. I have absolved *you*, because I am satisfied that you are a sincere and penitent believer; such a one as God himself would absolve; although you yourself in your humility might have doubted about your own condition. What I have done was not at all necessary to your salvation. It was intended, coming from God’s minister, to re-assure and strengthen your drooping mind. Take therefore the comfort of what I have done, and avoid the danger of it. Do not rest in it, I mean; but go on to make your repentance more perfect, and your faith more steadfast. Then most assuredly will God himself, at the last day, confirm my present act, and acquit you of all sin for ever.”

“I hope, Sir,” she said with great feeling, “that I shall be grateful and still humble; not puffed up with pride, nor forgetful of the duties, which are yet in my power to perform. But from the account which you have now given me, I am at a loss how to understand the Absolutions in the Morning and Evening Services; and in the Communion. The whole congregation, and all the communicants, cannot be true penitents, or true believers; and yet you appear to absolve them all alike.”

“No,” I answered, “it is not so. I read indeed a form of words

in the Morning and Evening Services, which is called the Absolution; but I do no more than tell the congregation, in that form, for their encouragement and consolation, after the confession of their sins, that God pardons and absolves all *them* that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel. I do not there exercise the power, which however I mention as belonging to me, of declaring in my own person that the penitent are absolved and forgiven. Nor again do I exercise it in the office for the Communion. What is there called the Absolution is a simple wish or prayer, on the part of the minister, that God may have mercy on all the communicants, and pardon their sins, and bring them to everlasting life. You have been misled by the name. All the three forms are called Absolutions; but the first merely declares whom God will pardon; and the second expresses a devout desire that God may pardon all who are then at his altar; the third, which is in the Visitation-service, and which I have just pronounced over *you*, is the only proper Absolution; but it must be understood in the manner in which I have endeavoured to explain it to you; not as necessary to your salvation; nor as if *I* were the person who forgave you your sins; but acting in the name of *him*, who alone is able to forgive sin; and acting as his minister and instrument, whom he has authorized and employs to declare his great mercy to sinners; for the express comfort and satisfaction of your conscience troubled with the remembrance of many iniquities, and longing earnestly for an authoritative assurance that God accepts your faith and penitence; I have pronounced this particular form of absolution, being assured by the glad tidings of the Gospel that a person under the circumstances in which I suppose *you* to be, is indeed forgiven in heaven. Do you understand this matter now?"

"I think I do, Sir," she answered; "and I am sure of one thing; that I ought to receive great comfort from knowing that you have a favourable opinion of my case. For, if your opinion had not been favourable, you would not have absolved me. But I will follow your advice, and not stop idly here. I will pray, not only that I may endure to the end, as I now am; but also that I may get onward to something better. Is it not St. Paul, Sir, who says, we must reach forward to those things which are before?" "It is," I replied; "until we come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And now I must bid you farewell for to-day. I will see you again, if God think fit." I touched her hand, and hurried away; not daring to mark her feelings.

From this time, although she lived some weeks, and I saw her often, she showed no disposition to enter into any further conversation with me. I generally inquired of any person that might

happen to be in the cottage, how she was; and then of herself whether I should pray with her; to which she always gladly assented. But, towards the last, when I put the same question to her, her answer was, that she wished me to choose one prayer, the most beautiful of all. I read in consequence, with a slight alteration, the prayer for a sick person when there appeareth small hope of recovery. As I left the room, she followed me with her eyes; evidently intending to show that she did not expect to see me again in this world. It was a most solemn farewell; and I shall never forget it.

However she was alive the next day; and, as they assured me, still in the possession of her faculties; and I read the Commendatory Prayer. But she did not once raise up her eyes towards me to give me a single look. Her hands were within the bed-clothes, so that I could not touch them. Her soul was purged from all earthly care. It was waiting in still patience and in an awful calm for the signal of separation from the body, that it might mount to heaven to its God and Saviour.

This solemn sight arrested and fixed my attention for many minutes; but at length recollecting my duties, and standing over her with my hands outstretched; I pronounced aloud the following benediction.

“Unto God’s gracious mercy and protection we commit thee, in this thy great extremity. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee, and overshadow thee with his wings, in the agony of this thy last conflict. The Lord be gracious unto thee, and make his face to shine upon thee, whilst thou art passing through the valley of the shadow of death. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee with a cheering and glorious light, which may give thee a foretaste of that peace, which surpasseth all understanding, and of that bliss, which is at God’s right hand for evermore.”

The dying woman, roused by this appropriate blessing, and the devout tone with which it was uttered, made an effort to raise her half-closed eyes towards me; but in a single instant she closed them quite; whether it were that the leaden hand of death now weighed heavily upon her eye-lids; or that she feared, by opening them, to entangle herself again with human things.

In this state I left her; being myself incapable of any thing more, if any thing more had been necessary. A few hours afterwards a messenger informed me that she had breathed her last in the same undisturbed tranquillity.

At the proper time she was buried by her sons, as her husband had been. When I had finished the ceremony, and was retiring from the grave; William Barton’s wife, apparently deputed by the rest, came out of the crowd of mourners, and thanked me with great

propriety and much feeling for every kindness which I had shown to the family. This mark of gratitude in such a place and after such an awful rite, being quite unusual and altogether unexpected, I was too much affected by it to make any other reply, than by touching my hat, and by a slight inclination of my head, as I hastened homeward.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ALMSWOMEN—PROSELYTISM.

§ 1. MRS. CALLENDER, MRS. SOMERS, MRS. VINICOMB, MRS. BONNETT, MRS. HOLMES.

ONE day, as I was passing by the Almshouse, I heard a great hubbub among the old women; and I observed several of them at their doors talking across the court-yard to each other. I went in to see what was the cause of this unusual ferment; and having first come in contact with Mrs. Callender, I exclaimed, "Hey-day! Mrs. Callender, what's the matter now?" "Oh! Sir," she answered with much glee, "we have had a visiter here; a strange Lady just come into the parish; I don't know her name, Sir; but I know where she lives." And then she described the house to me. "Well," I said; "and what of this? Has the Lady been speaking with you, or giving you any thing?" "Yes, Sir, both," she replied; "and for *my* part, my advice is, that we should take what she gives, and thank her too; but not mind what she speaks. I am sure her speaking will do *me* no harm, and her gifts may do me good; so I am very merry about it, Sir, as you see; but some of the rest are very angry, and have taken great offence at her."

My curiosity was excited by this prelude of Mrs. Callender's; but I soon began to suspect, that the Lady was looking out for proselytes amongst these poor old women; and finding them rather obstinately attached to High-Church-principles, and difficult to be won by arguments, was trying the surer method of bribing them into her opinions. I said therefore, "do not be so sure, Mrs. Callender; gifts have great power of changing people's minds; we are apt enough to think as *they* do, who seem to be kind to us; and so to give up our better judgment. If she would be content to supply your little bodily wants, and give you some tea and sugar now and then, without talking to you, and trying to unsettle your minds, it would be all very well; but I fear it is *this*, which she is aiming at; and therefore you must be constantly on your guard, and take especial care that you are not corrupted by the gifts." "You may depend upon *me*, Sir," she replied rather more gravely; "for, besides other reasons, I cannot understand her; she uses such words,

as I never heard at Church, or saw in my Bible or Prayer-book. They are Latin and Greek to *me*." "And, pray, what *are* they?" I inquired. "Oh! dear, Sir," she answered; "if you want to know more about it, you must go to Mrs. Somers; she had a great deal more talk with the Lady than I had; and she is quite full of it, and will be glad to tell you every thing." "Very well," I said; "I will go then to Mrs. Somers," and away I went.

Mrs. Somers, it seems, being lame, and not able to stir from home, like Mrs. Callender, had seen the Lady oftener than *her*, and indeed than any of the rest of the old women; but still she was unable to give me an intelligible account of what the Lady intended to say; and, in short, I have no doubt that she misunderstood every thing; if not, nothing could well have been more absurd. Absurd it was, at all events, to talk in such a manner as to be capable of being so misunderstood; and if this strange Lady had conversed much with the poor, so as to ascertain the very limited extent of their knowledge and understanding, she might have been aware, how liable these old women must be to be misled by words and phrases, which were quite new to most of them, and which, in fact, had no very definite meaning. But words and phrases seem to make an essential part of the religion of some people; their religion would be nothing without them; and therefore, when religion is the subject of conversation, these words and phrases are ever in their mouths. I do not mean to say that this Lady's religion was solely of that description; for her stay here was very short, and I never became acquainted with her; but it was evident that her language was the cant fanatic language of the conventicle, and not the sober scriptural language of the Church of England. But to return to the story.

Mrs. Somers, when I entered her cottage, was not recovered from the flurry of the last conference, which had just ended. Had I indeed been two minutes sooner, I should have encountered this female missionary upon the very field of battle. "What is the matter," I said, "my good Mrs. Somers? Who has disturbed you in this manner?" "Oh! Sir," she replied, "I am quite out of breath; and I was never so angry before in my life. We have had here one of the strangest ladies, Sir, that ever was seen in the world. Could you have thought it, Sir? She says that this Bible of mine is good for nothing. Why, there is'n't a more beautiful Bible in all the parish. I defy any body to show me another equal to it. I have had it these fifty years. You know my Bible, Sir. You have looked at it, and praised it very often. Look at it again, Sir, she can be no Christian, nor gentlewoman, I think, that finds no fault with *my* Bible."

Thus she was running on, exhausting her scanty breath, and full of indignation against the supposed injury, which she had received.

"Well, well," I said, "my good Mrs. Somers, sit you down, and compose yourself, and we will have a little talk about it. You may very properly set a high value upon this sacred book; it contains the words of eternal life. But besides *that*, it may well be a great treasure to you in itself. It is one of Barker's Bibles, which are much prized every where; these red lines are very pretty; and although you have been using it constantly for so many years, it is not much the worse for wear. Any person of common taste and judgment must be pleased with this Bible; and it is no wonder, that one who has possessed it so long, and has studied it so much, both in sickness and in health, should be a little mortified to hear it made light of. But are you quite sure, that you did not mistake the Lady's meaning?"

"Oh! no, Sir," she interrupted me eagerly; "I could not mistake her; she was plain enough about *that*." "Why, what did she say?" I inquired. "Tell me, if you can remember them, the exact words." "O dear! Sir," she answered, "I cannot remember one quarter of what she said. She said a great deal indeed; but this, I am sure, was a part of it. "What is *your* Bible worth? It is good for nothing." "Perhaps," I said, "in speaking those words, if she did really speak them, the Lady did not lay so much stress upon the word *your*, as you yourself have now done; and so she might have meant, not *your* Bible in particular, which I hold here in my hand, but all Bibles whatsoever; the Bible itself, in general."

"Then she must be a wicked woman indeed, if she meant to speak in that manner; far more wicked than I thought her before. What, Sir? To ask, what is the Bible worth; and to say the Bible is good for nothing, surely this is very strange, Sir, and very wicked; and I cannot help lifting up my hands in astonishment at it." And so she did, whilst she spoke; and horror too was strongly marked in her countenance; for she was pious in proportion to her knowledge, and beyond it.

"Well, but," I said, "let us see our way a little. Perhaps there was something more spoken in the very same sentence, than merely those few words." "Oh! yes, Sir," she replied, "a great deal more." "Well then," I continued, "if she used many more words in the same sentence, she might possibly have meant something very different from what you imagine. Suppose, for instance, when she came in, that she had found you reading this nice Bible of yours; and that she might have feared, lest you should put your trust in reading, alone; and so to warn you of that danger, she might have said, what is your Bible worth? Your Bible is good for nothing; unless you practise what you read there."

Here she stopped me at once, not being able to restrain herself to hear me out. "I understand you very well, Sir; but I am po-

sitive that she meant nothing of that sort; for she never talks about practice, Sir. No, no! she thinks that the greater the sinner, the greater the saint. And, would you believe it, Sir? she finds fault with your discourses, and says you are not a Gospel Preacher, because you tell us that we must be good, and practise what we read, and that without holiness we shall never get to heaven. No, no, Sir! she scorns good works, and calls the doers of them your moral men, and declares that they will never be saved by the Gospel. So that you see, Sir, as clear as God's sun at noon-day, that she never could have meant to say any thing of the kind, which you have supposed."

Having now ascertained that this female stranger had been meddling with my name and ministry, and endeavouring to undermine the confidence which was reposed in me by these aged members of my flock, I began to consider the affair as much more important than it had appeared to me before, and I was the more anxious to discover what were the actual things which she had said, and what was the impression which she had made, that I might set about more effectually to counteract her machinations.

"Do you know," I inquired, "whether she has ever been to our Church?" "No, *that* she hasn't," was her reply; "for I told her to go there, and then she would find out for herself what sort of instruction you give us, Sir, when you preach to us." "And pray," I inquired again, "what did she say to this?" "Oh, Sir," says she, 'I cannot think of such a thing as to sit under Dr. Warton. He does not preach the Gospel; he is one of your moral preachers, and will never save your souls that way.' So I said to her, Why Ma'am, you need not sit under him in such a Church as ours. I warrant you the pew-opener will get you a sitting in the gallery; and then you may be on a level with him, or above him, if you like that better. Upon this, Sir, she was a little angry, and said, 'You mistake my meaning, good woman; to sit under a person, is to hear him, and to be instructed by him.' Oh, says I, I ask your pardon, Ma'am; we never use such language here; but, if that be all, you cannot do better than sit under Dr. Warton, as you call it; and if the folks would not *hear* him only, but do what he tells them, as the Bible also bids them, then methinks they would not be far from the kingdom of God. For this too have I read in my Bible. Do *you* remember it, Ma'am?"

"Upon my word, Mrs. Somers," said I, "you talked very well to this Lady. And you might have put her in mind, that it was Jesus Christ himself, our blessed Lord and Saviour, who mentioned something of that sort to the Scribe in the Gospel, when he came to question him about his doctrines; and how we are told also, that Jesus loved the youth, who had faithfully kept all the commandments, and how he wished him to do one good work more; namely,

to sell his property for the benefit of the poor. Could she have better authority for the excellence of the moral duties than the authority of Jesus Christ himself? He loved the young man, who performed those duties; he praised the Scribe, who reasoned well about them, and told him that he was not far from the kingdom of God; but, what is more, in his divine sermon on the mount, he preached every one of those very moral duties, and commanded men to observe them, and declared most awfully, that at the day of judgment, he would not accept those who cried out, Lord, Lord, but those who did the will of his heavenly Father. You see, therefore, my good Mrs. Somers, that I should make a bad Minister of Christ's Gospel, and that I should preach very little like my great Master, if I did not preach, and enforce, with all my might, such morals as tend to make individuals, and families, and nations virtuous, prosperous, and happy. And it would be still worse for that man, who should venture to speak of those morals, as if they were to be despised, or undervalued. Remember what Christ says on that subject, and how he threatens those who break the least of God's commandments, and teach, or encourage other men to do the same. In short, the end of all Christ's preaching was to bring sinners to repentance, to make men holy, and thus to prepare them for heaven; and the end of all our preaching should be exactly what *his* was. This then being so plain, and the apostles also having acted according to this pattern, I cannot persuade myself, but that you must be mistaken here again with respect to the Lady's meaning; and I think it probable, that she only intended to tell you, that the best morals in the world, without faith in Christ, would be of no avail to any man; which is perfectly true; and that is the doctrine which I preach, and no doubt it is the doctrine of every other Minister of the Established Church. It is your own doctrine, Mrs. Somers, is it not? You go to Church, and partake of God's ordinances; you are sober, and honest in all your dealings; you keep your tongue from evil speaking; you try to practise every duty belonging to your station; and yet you know very well, that your best services of this kind are but imperfect after all, and could never of themselves entitle you to the reward of heaven; and that your only dependence for the acceptance of such services, is upon God's grace through Jesus Christ. This *must* have been the Lady's meaning. Did she tell you how she knew that I did not preach the Gospel?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied; "I asked her that very question; and she said that she knew it by common fame, and because Dr. Warton's name was not printed in the list of the Gospel-Preachers; and some other outlandish word she used, which I could not understand." "Was it Evangelical?" I inquired. "Yes, Sir," she answered, "that was the very word. Pray what did she mean by *that*, Sir?"

"Why really, Mrs. Somers," I said, "I can hardly tell you what this Lady might have meant by it; but I can easily explain to you the true meaning of the word. For instance, Evangelical doctrine properly means a doctrine consistent with, and derived from, the Gospel; and an Evangelical Preacher is properly one who preaches such a doctrine. I should hope, therefore, that all the Ministers of our Church were justly to be called Evangelical Preachers; but I must inform you, that there are certain persons who claim this title exclusively and entirely for themselves; and they call all the rest contemptuously Moral Preachers, as you heard the Lady call *me*; although she knew nothing of *me*, or of my doctrines, except by report."

"But pray tell me, Sir," said she, "what do these persons preach, which they suppose to be more Gospel than what *you* preach? I should like to know it very much." "Perhaps," I replied, "I might readily guess what some of their subjects are, which they are constantly dwelling upon, and it will not be amiss just to mention them to you. Human nature, you know, was greatly corrupted by the fall of Adam, and in consequence we are all of us born into the world with an inclination towards evil; but those Evangelical persons are not satisfied with that way of stating the matter; they will have it, that human nature is utterly corrupt, and depraved; and that there is not a single particle of good about us; but that from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot we are none of us any thing else than one foul mass of wickedness. This then is one of the subjects which they are always harping upon; and if any Clergyman should happen to say any thing in his discourses, which implied that he did not think quite so badly of human nature, they cry out immediately, that he is not an Evangelical Preacher; that he does not preach the Gospel; that he is one of your moral men. For my part, I do not see what is to be gained by saying, that human nature is quite corrupt, rather than very corrupt. Tell me, Mrs. Somers, if you know, as you do, that you are by nature very corrupt, and that nothing but the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, can free you from that corruption; does not that reflection always make you feel humble with respect to yourself, and grateful with respect to God?"

"To be sure it does, Sir," she answered; "and I have often heard you preach about it." "And, on the other hand," I inquired again, "if you fancied that you are quite corrupt; that is a filthy mass of corruption, and utterly lost, and irrecoverably dead, as it were, in sin and wickedness, and not able to take a single step to get out of it, would not *that* throw you into despair?" "Yes, indeed, *that* it would," she said; "and I think I should be tempted to hang myself, or cut my own throat, as Mary Simpkins and Jane Bellamy did, when they were troubled in their minds about their

religion. Wasn't it this thought, Sir, of their desperate condition which drove them mad?"

"It is very likely," I answered; "but next comes their doctrine of grace, which is to rescue men from that wretched condition, as they say, without any endeavours on their own part; for they are not capable of making any; and indeed in spite of all their endeavours against it. Now I ask you, what will the sinner do, who has been taught this doctrine? Supposing himself unable to do any thing good, or to take any steps towards his salvation, will he not continue in sin, expecting this grace to come; and will he not excuse himself for his sins, whilst he continues in them, by saying that God's grace was not bestowed upon him?"

"To be sure he will, Sir," she replied; "and well he may." "In fact," I proceeded, "this is the very thing that I myself have heard said, by one of that class, who was given to stealing, upon being reproached with his bad habits; 'I wait,' was his plea, 'for God's grace to overcome them for me, for I can do nothing of myself.' Now *I* say, as *they* do, that we can do nothing of ourselves; and I ascribe every thing good, that we perform, or think, to the gracious influence of God's Holy Spirit; but I suppose this Spirit to work with us, and to help our endeavours; not to make those endeavours unnecessary. Can you lift up this bed of yours?"

"No, Sir," she answered, "*that* I cannot." "Then I continued, "with respect to the lifting up of this bed, we may very properly say, that you can do nothing of yourself; for nothing that *you* can do of yourself will be of any use. You are too weak; you want strength more than your own. Is not this so?" "Very true, Sir," she replied; "and if any kind neighbours should help me to lift it up, ought I not to thank them, for it, and confess that I owed all to *them*? For without them, you know, Sir, it would never have been done." "You understand me exactly," I said; "and I conclude, from reason and Scripture, that it is the same with respect to grace. It is reasonable that it should be so, because otherwise we should be somewhat like these chairs and tables, or this poker. Can this poker attempt at all to stir the fire of itself?" I took the poker into my hand. "No, Sir," she answered, laughing. I asked again, "Can it refuse to stir the fire, when I move it for that purpose?" "No, Sir, nor that neither," she said. I inquired once more, "Can it stir the fire in any other manner, or for any other length of time, than I wish?" "To be sure, it cannot, Sir," she replied. "Then," said I, "according to this doctrine, of which I am speaking, there is no difference between a man, and this poker of yours. We are all mere instruments, or machines; and our reason and understanding are of no use to us whatever."

"So it seems, Sir, indeed," she answered; "but *that* cannot

be." "No, truly," I said; "reason is one of the greatest blessings that God has bestowed upon us; by reason we are superior to the brute beasts, and even rise to the knowledge of God himself. It would be strange therefore, if our reason were to be thrown away on any occasion, and more especially on the most important occasion of all, and we were to be reduced even below the brutes, to the rank of things without life; so that this doctrine, you see, will not hold with reason; and I will be bound to say that every page of Scripture is against it. In every page it is either implied, or we are actually told, that God's grace is to be sought by prayer, and by asking for it; that it works with us, when given, and helps our infirmities; that if we use it properly, it will be given to us in greater abundance; and that we must go through a course of preparation to make ourselves fit for it; and that moreover we may resist it, we may do despite to it, we may quench it, we may drive it from us. Let me advise you, therefore, Mrs. Somers, whatever this Lady may say to the contrary, not to sit in idle expectation, and doing nothing; and supposing that some time or other God will do every thing for you; or if not, giving yourself up to despair; but read and study your Bible and Prayer-Book at home, as you do now; and go to Church to hear them read there, and join in all the sacred ordinances of God's religion, and walk in all his commandments blameless, like the holy people of old; and then, I warrant you, God will bless you, and will work in you, as St. Paul says, both to will, and to do, whatever is necessary for your salvation. For he loves, and has promised to help all, who with fear and trembling endeavour to work out their own salvation."

"I have been trying, Sir," said Mrs. Somers, "for a long time to do what you now counsel me to do; and I hope and trust that, by the aid of God's Spirit, and the merits of my blessed Saviour, I shall build upon a rock, and not upon the sand. The Lady has perplexed me with some things, and made me angry with other things; but, if possible, I shall go on day after day, doing more of what I ought to do, and forsaking more of what I ought not to do, that when it pleases God to call me, I may be the better prepared to obey. And you know, Sir, he will reckon with us, as I told the Lady, for all the things done in our bodies, whether good or bad; and will judge us according to our works; so that if we go before him without any good works at all, without having any treasure laid up in heaven, what will become of us? He might pardon us for Christ's sake, and because of our hearty repentance at the close of life; so that we might escape the dreadful condemnation of hell-fire; but the rewards are to be over and above according to our good works, Sir, are they not?"

"Yes," I replied; "the Scriptures assert it again and again; and whenever they assert also that we shall be rewarded in con-

sequence of our faith, it is very plain that they mean such a faith as is the same with, or always followed by good works; for faith without works is dead. The truth is this; our salvation from eternal death and punishment we owe entirely to Christ's dying for us, and suffering in our stead. *That* is the foundation. Next, it is by our faith in *him*, and in his death and merits, that we gain any interest in those merits, and make them applicable to ourselves. But, lastly, the positive rewards of everlasting happiness and glory, if our lot be in heaven, and the quantity of those rewards, will be measured by our good works, done in Christ's name, and for *his* sake. And observe, no other works, however well the world may think of them, will be properly good, or of any use to us; on the contrary; they will rather be accounted sins; because in doing of them we did not look to Christ, but to some other object, or rule of our own invention. Nor again will any good works save us of ourselves; salvation is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ; but, we being thus saved, those good works will follow us when we die, and will obtain for us a proportionate reward, or rather a reward abundant beyond all measure in proportion to the infinite bounty of God. Do you understand me, Mrs. Somers?"

"Not every word that you say, Sir," she replied; "but I understand the whole doctrine very well; and I tried to argue with the Lady about it, Sir, in my own way; and first I thought that she went all upon faith; but when I told her, that my faith, as I was confident, was very sound, and that I could repeat all the Articles of it in the Creed by heart, and I actually began to repeat them to her for her better satisfaction, with respect to the soundness of my faith, would you think it, Sir? she absolutely laughed in my face, and sneered at the profession of my belief, and said that such a faith as that would never save my soul. I confess, Sir, I was very much hurt and shocked at this, and my anger too was roused, and I could not altogether control my tongue, and I cried out, what, Ma'am? the *high creed*, which comes from the Apostles themselves, which the whole congregation stands up to repeat together; is this nothing? Is this to be despised?"

"Well," I said, "my good Mrs. Somers, and how did the Lady attempt to explain this conduct of hers, which appeared to *you* to be so full of impiety?" "Oh, Sir, not at all," she answered; "not at all to pacify me; and then came the business of the Bible, Sir, which made the matter worse; and so, Sir, away she bounced out of my house. And, whatever she might give me, I never wish to see her again. To talk slightly, Sir, of the *high creed* and of *my* Bible; was ever any thing like it heard before?"

Thus was Mrs. Somers running on with warmth, but I stopped her, that she might recover her breath, and also to inquire after other subjects, which I thought likely to have been mentioned in

the discussion. The terms however themselves, which the Lady used in talking of these subjects, were not understood by this old woman; and she had not comprehended what was said, so far as to be able to give any account of it, right or wrong. She recollected the words, predestination, election, regeneration, assurance, final perseverance, and many others, but she knew nothing further about them; and she hoped, she said, that the understanding of them was not necessary to her salvation. I ventured to assure her that it was not; and that no one would be judged at the last day merely by what they *knew*, but by what they *did*. "To know God, and to love and fear him," I said, "and to know also his Son Jesus Christ, whom God sent into the world to instruct and to save mankind, and to feel the want of such a Saviour, and to put your trust in him alone, and to ask *him* to give you his Holy Spirit, to make *you* holy too; and to do righteousness, and to love mercy; this knowledge, and this practice, is enough for all, and will save all; for it includes every thing essential to salvation."

"I always hoped so," she answered, "and thought so too, Sir; and I give you many thanks for your trouble in talking to me about these things. But you must go, Sir, to Mrs. Vinicomb, and Mrs. Milton, if you would hear more about the Lady. I suspect, indeed, that Mrs. Milton agrees with her pretty well; for I have often heard her talking in the same way, and using the same words, as the Lady did; and once, Sir, when we were admiring one of your discourses, she said it was not Gospel. But Mrs. Vinicomb, and all the rest of us think alike." "Very well," I said, "then I will go to Mrs. Vinicomb immediately; and afterwards, when I am more fully informed, I will go to Mrs. Milton; so good morning to you, Mrs. Somers!"

Mrs. Vinicomb was at her door. I followed her into her house, and accosted her at once; "So, Mrs. Vinicomb, you have had a Lady with you, who has been kind enough to examine you about your religion, to see whether you are in the right way to salvation or not. Why it is high time for you to know that, Mrs. Vinicomb; you are old, and grey-headed. But I should have thought, that you must have known it pretty well already, considering how regularly you go to Church, both on Sundays and on week days, and how constantly you study your Bible and Prayer-Book at home."

"O yes, Sir," said Mrs. Vinicomb, "*that* is all very true. But the Lady says that it won't do. I must be regenerate, she says. *That* is the word, Sir, I am sure. She used it so often, I could not mistake. And sometimes she talked of a new birth, and of being born again; so I suppose all these words mean the same thing."

"I suppose so too," I replied. "The word 'regeneration,' is

used twice in our English Scriptures; and both *that* word, and the word *regenerate*, are used in our Prayer-Book; so that you might have had some notion of their *proper* meaning, before the Lady talked with you on such a subject. The expression of 'a new birth,' does not occur in any part of our Bible; but you may probably recollect it in the Catechism, and there the meaning of it is as plain as possible. And the expression of being 'born again,' is used, according to our translation, twice in the conversation of Nicodemus with Jesus Christ, and very often in our Prayer-Book; and always in a manner sufficiently clear. In short, all these expressions, in their principal sense, mean simply baptism itself, or the great benefits of which we become partakers by baptism. What therefore could the Lady intend to say? Surely you have been baptized, Mrs. Vinicomb; have you not?"

"Oh! yes, Sir," she cried out eagerly; my parents were good Christians, and had me baptized when I was quite an infant. If you doubt it, Sir, I will show you the certificate of it taken from the register; I have it here in this box."

She hastened towards the box, and began to unlock it, saying, at the same time, "I have kept it here, Sir, very safe for many a long year; and I would not part with it for ever so much money."

By this time I had laid hold of her arm, and desired her not to trouble herself to search after the certificate, "because," said I, "I have no doubt whatever, but that you were properly baptized at the usual period. The thing which surprises me is, that you did not mention it to the Lady, and tell her, that, as you had been baptized, you must of course have undergone the new birth; that is, you must have been born again, or have become a regenerate person."

"Well, Sir," she answered, sadly disappointed that I would not permit her to hunt out the certificate, amidst a medley of things which the box contained, "I will show the certificate however to the Lady, if she comes again, and convince her that I have been baptized; *that* I will."

"You may do so," I said, "but I suspect she will not value it as *you* do; no, nor baptism itself. I shrewdly guess that she considers baptism, and regeneration, or the new birth, to be very different things. Did she pretend to be a Churchwoman?"

"Yes, yes, Sir," she replied; "the Lady reckoned herself a true Churchwoman, and was positive that we were all in the wrong." "Oh! very well," I said; "and did she tell you, when this new birth took place, and whether you would be sensible of it at the moment by your feelings?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "the Lady told me, that the change was so sudden, and so great, when the new birth happened, that it would make itself known and felt, whether we would or not; and that it might take place at any pe-

riod of our lives; and, what is best of all, Sir, that having passed through it, we shall be full of wonderful comfort and delight, and be for ever after assured of our salvation."

"This is very fine indeed, Mrs. Vinicomb," I said, "if it be true. Give me your Prayer-Book; and let us look at the office for the ceremony of Baptism, that we may see what the opinion of our Church is upon this important matter of regeneration. And if the Lady were here, being herself a Churchwoman, she could not but abide by the Liturgy of the Church." "To be sure, Sir," answered Mrs. Vinicomb, whilst she put her Prayer-Book into my hands."

"Here then," I said, "at the very beginning of the service, I find this matter so stated, as to make it quite evident, that our Church supposes the infant to be regenerate, and born anew, by baptism. Why is the infant brought to be baptized? Because, says the service, none can enter into the kingdom of God, except they be regenerate, and born anew, of water, and of the Holy Ghost. And this is asserted on the authority of Jesus Christ himself, who positively laid down this doctrine in his conversation with Nicodemus."

"Oh! Sir," she said, "the Lady read all that to me out of her own little Bible, which she always carries about with her; and then she told me, that by this history it was quite certain that I could not be saved, except I was born again of the Spirit. "That is very true," I replied; "but what does it mean to be born again of the Spirit? Jesus told Nicodemus, that he must be born again. Nicodemus wondered how that could be, understanding the expression in a carnal sense. Then Jesus immediately explains his meaning, namely, that he must be born of water and of the Spirit; that is, he must be baptized, and enter thereby into a new covenant with God; the very first benefit of which covenant is, the receiving of the Holy Ghost, and the washing away the stain of original sin. Do you comprehend what I mean by original sin?"

"Yes, Sir," she answered, "very well; you mean the sin which we inherit from Adam and Eve; which we have about us when we are born, and long before we have committed sin ourselves." "You are quite right," I said; "and it is from this that we are relieved by baptism. In our natural state, as we are born into the world, we are liable to the wrath of God on account of this original sin; but by baptism we are put into a new state with respect to God; a state of grace, or favour; and therefore it may very well be said, that we are born again. It is a birth indeed beyond all comparison more valuable than our natural birth, because we enter by it at once into Christ's kingdom here, and may thus be trained up for Christ's kingdom in heaven, which is to come hereafter. Look again to the service. Here you see, in the very opening sentence,

this calamity of original sin is stated as the primary reason for bringing the child to be baptized. Forasmuch, it says, as all men are conceived and born in sin; and then it goes on to what we mentioned before. In perfect agreement with this doctrine, St. Paul in his Epistle to Titus, speaking of the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, evidently means baptism; of which the outward sign was washing with water, and the inward blessing which went with it was the gift of the Spirit. Only there is this difference to be observed: St. Paul baptized persons that were grown up to man's estate, when he converted such persons from Paganism to Christianity, and all those persons had added sins of their own to original sin. Whereas therefore infants are released by baptism from original sin only; for they are not guilty of actual sin; those persons were released from all sin, both original and actual, if they were baptized in sincerity and faith.

“But let us proceed with the ministration of baptism in the Prayer-Book. In the first prayer we beseech God to wash the child, and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost; and what is this but to signify, that we consider sanctification by the Holy Ghost to be the main part of baptism? And certainly to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost is precisely the same as to be born of the Spirit. “Again, in the second prayer, we call upon God on behalf of the infant, that *he* coming to God's holy baptism may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration. Therefore our Church supposes spiritual regeneration to attend upon baptism, and we pray that it may produce the remission of sins.

“Once more, in the third prayer, our Church directs us to ask of God, to give his Holy Spirit to the infant, that he may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation. Therefore it is presumed that the infant is born again of the Spirit at his baptism, by the great goodness and mercy of God.

“But now mark what the minister says immediately after the child has been baptized. Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate. Can any thing be plainer than this, my good Mrs. Vinicombe? Does not this show us, beyond all possibility of denial, that our Church reckons baptism and regeneration the same thing, or that the latter is the necessary consequence of the former?” “Indeed it does, Sir,” she replied; “and I was very stupid, so many christenings as I have attended in my day, not to recollect this sentence; but I shall remember it in future, and if the Lady pays me another visit, I will give it her well. She frightened me sadly, Sir.”

“We will see about *that* presently,” I said, “whether you ought to be frightened or not with respect to your condition. But certainly none of those words need frighten you; for now you perceive that the Lady has perverted the sense of them, or has invented a

new sense not known to our Church, and I think also not to be found in the Bible. In fact the word regeneration is to be met with there only once more than I have already mentioned, namely, in the 19th chapter of St. Matthew, and the 28th verse. Look at *that* when you have leisure, and you will soon see that it is there used in a sense which has nothing to do with what we are now talking about.

But we have not yet finished the service for baptism. In the last prayer we are ordered to yield our hearty thanks to our most merciful Father, because it hath pleased him to regenerate the infant with his Holy Spirit." When I read this, Mrs. Vinicomb lifted up her hands in astonishment, and wondered at the Lady, and wondered at herself; at herself for her ignorance, or forgetfulness; at the Lady for so wilful a perversion of those words, as she thought it, and for alarming her, as she thought also, without any cause whatever. And she said moreover, "I shall be very glad to see her again, Sir, that I may tell her my mind. I am sure she can be no Churchwoman, as she pretended to be, but one of those rank Methodists, Sir, who go about preaching at Rector's Green or elsewhere, with the rabble after them."

"Well, well," I said, "Mrs. Vinicomb, do not be angry with the Lady, or the Methodists; we shall perhaps know more by and bye; but before I go, I will point out to you the passage in the Catechism which I mentioned a little while ago, and which makes the new birth to take place at our Baptism. Here it is. The Catechism says, that in Baptism, besides the outward sign of water, there is an inward spiritual grace; namely, a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness. This is decisive as to the opinion of our Church. There cannot be a new birth unto righteousness, without the gift of the Spirit. Therefore, in Baptism we are born of the Spirit.

"Now then, my good Mrs. Vinicomb, as we have settled the proper meaning of those expressions, which the unknown Lady is so fond of; and, as we find that they do not apply to *you* in your present state, still you must be careful not to deceive yourself by supposing, that, because you were regenerate, and admitted into a new covenant with God at your Baptism, you will therefore be saved at the last day; or because the Spirit was given to you at your Baptism, that therefore you want his help no more. If you supposed so, you would be terribly mistaken. It happens every day, that covenants between man and man are not fulfilled; and a covenant between God and man may be broken; not by God; he will be sure to perform his part; but by man, who is almost as sure to fail. And, with respect to the Spirit, you want his help every day of your life; you can do nothing of yourself without it; of yourself you cannot stand upright for a moment; and, if you have broken your part of the covenant by a defect of faith in Christ, or by actual sin,

then what is to become of you? What will you do for your salvation, unless the Spirit renew you? Here is the true fear; the fears which the Lady occasioned you about the meaning of words were idle fears. Now we come to the true state of the case. Are you daily renewed by the Holy Spirit of God? Look here at the Collect for Christmas-day. See what it is that you are taught to pray for; namely, that, being already regenerate and adopted into God's family of children, still you may be daily renewed by his Holy Spirit. If the Lady only meant to tell you this, although I might find fault with her expressions, and for using words in a different sense from the proper one, yet I could not find fault with her doctrine. To be saved, you must daily repent, and daily be renewed. But then, if I understood you rightly, the Lady talked of the necessity of some sudden and violent operation of the Spirit, of which you could not but be sensible at the time; which you would be quite unable to resist; and after which you would be filled with comfort and joy, nor doubt any longer about your salvation. Was this so?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied; "and when I confessed that nothing of the sort had ever happened to *me*, she seemed to pity me exceedingly; and she told me that if I were not converted, I could not be saved. I have often read, Sir, in my Bible about people being converted; but I think she must have found out a new sense for this word too, as she applied it to *me*. For surely, Sir, I am not to be called a Heathen; having been born of Christian parents, in a Christian land; and having been baptized at the proper age; and being a constant church-goer; and taking the Sacrament whenever it is administered."

"No, indeed," I said warmly, "such a term can never be applied justly to *you*, for the reasons which you have yourself stated; and if it might be called conversion, when a very profligate sinner almost dead in sin and having little sense of it, and a downright slave to the devil, is roused out of his perilous slumber, and turns from Satan to God, and flies to that Saviour, whom he despised and blasphemed before; for so great a change may perhaps be called a conversion; yet what has *this* to do with *you*, my good old friend? It is true you are not entirely without sin. Who is? But you are endeavouring at least to walk humbly and blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, and therefore you need no conversion. You need to be enlightened perhaps, and you need to be strengthened; that you may go on your way with more speed, with more courage, and with more certainty. Improvement might be advantageous to us all; but conversion is not wanted either by *me*, or by *you*, Mrs. Vinicomb."

"Thank you, thank you, Sir," she answered, "a thousand times, for setting my poor old heart at ease. I am not so perfect, Sir,

certainly, as I ought to be at my age. I acknowledge myself a sinner. But I never do a wrong thing without being sorry for it afterwards; or without asking God to forgive me for Christ's sake, or without resolving by his help to be more careful of my actions in future; and I think, Sir, that as I grow older, I grow more perfect, though still far behind, in my obedience to God's laws; and so, Sir, I have greater peace of mind, and better hopes with respect to my lot in the next world."

"Very well," I said; "then you want no other proof, that you are daily renewed by the Spirit. This is the method of his working; and by these fruits you may be just as sure of it, as you would be, if he sat upon your head in cloven tongues of fire. Never heed the Lady therefore. You need not the sudden and the violent, but only the gradual and gentle operations of the Holy Ghost, which you will probably never be able to distinguish from the workings of your own mind and conscience. But what matters it? You will know the Holy Spirit by your advancement in piety and virtue. Good day to you, Mrs. Vinicomb;" and so I took my leave.

My conversations with Mrs. Callender, Mrs. Somers, and Mrs. Vinicomb, having taken up as much time as I could conveniently spare, I determined to reserve Mrs. Milton for another day; especially as I had reason to think, that my conversation with *her* would not be a short one. But before I quitted the court, I stepped in to Mrs. Bonnett, who was the oldest of all the almswomen; being in her 95th year. I did not suspect that the Lady had been there; or at least that she would have attempted to make so aged a convert. I went merely to see the poor old woman, who was now beginning to ail, though she preserved the faculties of her mind to a very great degree; and she might have wished me to pray with her. Of late she had not been able to get to church, being exceedingly lame. It had cost her indeed more than an hour, with the help of crutches, to go there; although the distance was considerably less than a quarter of a mile. Nevertheless she persevered in the attempt to perform this duty, until she was one day knocked down, and run over by a carriage; yet without any dangerous hurt; but her friends would not suffer her to stir from home any more. Whenever she had succeeded in reaching the church, with so much exertion, and so much danger, she did not think one service a sufficient purchase; so she remained in her pew, 'till the whole business of the day was over. If it had been possible, like Anna the Prophetess, she would not have departed from God's house, night or day.

I discovered this circumstance of her remaining in the church, between the services, by a mere accident, upon going one winter's day into the vestry, where I saw the good old creature, by the fire, dining upon some bread and cheese. The pew-openers had kindly

placed her there on account of the severity of the weather. This discovery of mine was to her advantage; for I took care ever afterwards, when she was at church, to send her a more comfortable dinner. Such was Mrs. Bonnett; not a fit subject for a discreet person to try to proselyte. But the rage for proselytism overleaps all the boundaries of propriety and decency; and even this poor old lady was not secured from its attacks by her age or infirmities, but only by the steadiness of her principles, and the firmness of her character.

Upon entering I first saw Mrs. Bonnett's niece, an old woman herself, of the name of Ellis; and I said, "how does your Aunt do to-day, Mrs. Ellis?" "Here she is, Sir," was her answer, "sitting close by the fire. She has got a little cold, and for the last week has been very unked-like; and she has been talking two or three times of sending to ask you, Sir, to come and pray by her." "And why did you not send?" I said. "But it does not matter now; here I am."

A blanket suspended on a small clothes-horse, screened this aged almswoman from the wind, which poured in at the door. I went round, and came in front of her; and then I touched her hand, and sat down on a chair by her side. "I am sorry to hear from your niece," I said, "that you are but poorly; but I am come to comfort you." "God bless you for it!" She replied. "I was wishing to see you, Sir; and it is very kind of you to visit me without being sent for. Ah! Sir, you know how old I am; midway, Sir, between ninety and one hundred years. What wonder, being so stricken in years, if I be feeble in body! But I am heart-whole, Sir, nevertheless. God has been very gracious to me; and for many, many years of my long life I have had nothing the matter with me, breath or limb. Indeed I am very lame, and weak, now; but it only troubles me, because I cannot serve him in his own house. Ah! Sir, I shall soon be gathered to the dust; and I thank him for giving me these warnings."

"I am glad," I said, "my good Mrs. Bonnett, to hear you speak in this manner; but I knew very well that you would; and I am sure that our Heavenly Father will approve of it. You have always been of a contented disposition; and so wise and pious as to see the hand of Providence in every thing."

"And haven't I had good reason, Sir, for contentment," she replied, "and for thankfulness too? When labour was necessary for my support, I was healthy, and strong, and cheerful; when I became too old to labour, I was placed here, where I want for nothing. If any thing be lacking in this charity, I have kind friends, who make it up to me, and over and above; so that I can afford to have my niece here to help me in my infirmities; and she herself, poor creature, wants a sheltering-place. Could any body then be

more blessed than I have been! For as to riches, Sir, I never coveted them; they might have puffed me up with pride, or made me a glutton and a wine-bibber. No, no, Sir, the only evil is, that I have not made the best use which I might have done, of the uncountable mercies of God; so as to be able to appear before him with the greater boldness. But his throne, Sir, as I have often heard you say, is a throne of grace; and I have a powerful Mediator sitting on his right hand, even his own Son, the God-man, (you taught me that word, Sir,) to intercede for me with his Father, and to plead the all-sufficiency of what he did for me, whilst he was here in the flesh. I am humble, Sir, when I think of myself; I am without fear, when I think of *him*."

A pause ensued. She stopped in consequence of a little cough which troubled her; I was deeply affected, and lost in admiration of such sentiments, which were full of beauty and nobleness, and so strikingly portrayed the true, vital, practical Christianity. What? thought I to myself, am I come here to comfort this aged woman at the approach of death; or to teach her how to meet it? She has already the best comforter, and the best instructor, within her own bosom. She is a real Christian; and Christ, her great Master, whom she has so long and so faithfully served, has opened, and enlarged, and strengthened her mind, by his holy word, and by his Holy Spirit dwelling in her. I was conscious of my own inferiority; *my* religion in comparison with hers was mere empty speculation. A long resident in the almshouses without the necessity of labour, and a never-failing attendant upon her church, she had read and heard much; and God had blessed every thing to her soul's health; and such were the rich fruits that now bloomed forth when the tree itself was withered and decayed. A hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the ways of righteousness.

These and other similar reflections darted across my mind, whilst Mrs. Bonnett, assisted by her niece, was endeavouring to subdue the cough. She soon resumed her usual placid air; and it was now the proper time for *me* to speak. "Your confidence," I said, "my worthy old friend, is founded upon a rock; for it is founded upon Christ; and Christ is the rock of our salvation. But you have been wise also in never forgetting or neglecting that important text of Scripture, which saith, Let *him* that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity."

"Yes, Sir," she answered; "I have constantly had it in my eye; and I have tried to fulfil it; and I have had God's blessing upon my endeavours; so that I have certainly departed from much iniquity. I will not say all, Sir; that would be going too far, too far indeed; but I am a better Christian than I was in my earlier days; not because I cannot do now the sinful things, which I might have done then; but because I have been learning, step by step, and more and

more continually, that to be holy as God is holy must be what God wishes with respect to *us*, and would make us all."

"Very true," I said, "for then, you know, we might be fit for heaven, before we go there; and might be able to see God himself face to face; which will cause us unspeakable joy and glory; and not only *that*, but what a happy world would this be too! And does not God, do you think, desire to see us happy here, as well as hereafter? His mercy in saving sinners is wonderful, and always to be praised and magnified by us; he saved the thief at the instant of his death on the cross; but if all men were to go on in open wickedness like the thief to the last moment of their lives, and then be saved by some sudden unexpected act of God's good providence, their vicious habits being all changed and rooted out at once and in a single instant, surely this world would be nothing like what we should suppose that so wise and good a Being *must* have intended it to be; for the world would not be benefited by such changes as these."

Upon this Mrs. Ellis interposed, and said, "Aye, Sir, this brings it into my head to tell you, that there has been a strange Lady here with my aunt; and she talked a great deal about these sudden changes, and would have it, Sir, that nobody could be saved without them; and she tried to frighten my poor aunt, and to persuade her that her soul was in danger of being lost, because no such change that she knew of had happened to her." "And what did our good Mrs. Bonnett say to this?" I inquired. "Oh! Sir," she said, "my aunt told her that she had never read of such a doctrine in the Bible, nor heard any thing like it at Church."

"Yes," resumed Mrs. Bonnett herself, "and I told her besides, that the old man was to be put off, and the new man put on; by which I meant the forsaking of sin, and the becoming righteous and holy; not all at once, but by the constant labour and diligence of our whole lives, assisted by the Holy Spirit." "Nothing could be more just," I said, "than this account of the matter; and so it is that Scripture represents it; admonishing us to go on from strength to strength, and adding one virtue to another, till we come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. God forbid that we should assert that he cannot by his almighty power in the twinkling of an eye produce a sensible and total change in a wicked man's habits; and no doubt he has done it at various times for some great purposes of his providence. But this is not his usual way of working; and therefore we must not expect it to happen to ourselves, nor be alarmed if it do not; provided only that we are conscious of the sincerity of our repentance for past errors, and of our successful endeavours to grow daily in piety and virtue. For thus does the Spirit of God bear witness with our own spirit, that we are advancing in the divine favour, and towards the prize of our high

calling, much more effectually, and in a manner much more to be depended upon, than by any of those sudden and violent emotions, which might be only mistaken after all for the operations of the Holy Ghost, whilst they are in fact nothing but the fits of a dis-tempered fancy. But, pray, tell me, my good old friend, what did the Lady advise you to do, supposing you to be in so deplorable a condition?"

"Why, Sir," said Mrs. Bonnett, "the Lady lamented my case sadly, and said what a pity it was that I had not sat under a more awakening preacher; and that, if I were able to go, she would contrive it for me yet. Awakening, Sir, seemed an odd word; and I thought she meant that I always fell fast asleep at church; so I was a little angry, Sir, and told her that it was not *your* practice to let people sleep, whilst you were preaching; but to force them to keep wide awake. So she explained to me, that she meant no offence, but that she wished me to sit under a true Gospel-preacher."

Here Mrs. Ellis interposed again, and said, "Yes, Sir, and my poor aunt was still more disturbed at this, to be told that her Rector, whom she always listened to with so much pleasure and reverence, was not a preacher of the Gospel; and she taught the Lady much better than the Lady would have taught *her*. The Lady would have drawn her away from her church; but my aunt does not like any of the new-fangled methods of preaching." "No, no," resumed Mrs. Bonnett, "I was brought up in the Church, and in the Church I shall die, if God will. So I told, her, that it was a bad thing to have itching ears; and to run about gaping after different preachers; and that it would be far better to go to her own parish-church, and to obey *them* that were set over her in the Lord, without pretending to be wiser than *they* are, and to be able to find fault with their doctrines."

"Very well indeed, Mrs. Bonnett," I replied, "and you could not but be in the right, because the great Apostle, St. Paul, said the same." "Yes, Sir," interposed Mrs. Ellis; "and my aunt told her so; and away she went in a huff, because she could not contradict it." "She will not come again in a hurry," I said, "to instruct *you*, Mrs. Bonnett, in your religion. You are more able to instruct *her*; and if she arrives at maturer age, she will probably think as you do; and not go on in this manner, unstable in all the great principles, and ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. But now I will kneel down and pray with you."

This being done, I rose, wished her good bye, and departed.

I was posting away with speed; but before I had got out of the court, Mrs. Holmes beckoned to me from her door to come across to her. Although in a hurry I obeyed her summons; and having followed her into the house, she carefully closed the door, as if she

had a matter to communicate which was both important and demanded secrecy. "The Lady has been with me, Sir," she said in a whisper, and with a grave countenance; "but I told her at once, that I had pinned my faith on *your* sleeve, and that it would be only wasting her breath to talk to me about religion."

"Did she know," I inquired, "that you were a Scotchwoman, and the daughter of a minister of the Kirk?" "No," she answered, "not at first; but in the course of our talk I had occasion to tell her." "And had she not great hopes of your agreeing with her in her opinions when she heard *that*? She would think that you were a Calvinist, which I suspect she is herself; and that you embraced all those strange notions about the Spirit, which the old Presbyterians did, and which I have nearly ascertained that *she* does now."

"It is very likely, Sir," she replied; "for she began to talk to me about Predestination, and assurance, and the in-dwellings of the Spirit, and such like; and when I thought to disappoint her at once, by letting her know, that I had long ago faithfully and sincerely conformed myself to the Church of England in consequence of your instructions, she said immediately that the Church of England was founded on the principles of Calvin, and in proof of it she opened my Prayer-book, and showed me the 17th Article. Look, Sir, I have it here ready to ask you about it. You remember, Sir, I dare say, that though a Scotchwoman by birth, and the daughter of a minister, I never was a Calvinist in my life, in the sense that you explained the word to me; but the Article seems to point out that very sense, and it puzzles me sadly."

"Well, well," I replied; we will talk of this when I see you next; I am glad that you have mentioned your difficulty to me; but I have been detained longer than I expected; and I cannot stay now; so farewell for the present."

Thus at length I fairly escaped from the court; which indeed it was not easy to do at any time within a moderate period, when there were no such important matters to discuss. These old ladies had always a great deal to say, whenever I appeared amongst them. But upon this occasion they were full to overflowing; and I found upon further inquiry, that the unknown Lady had endeavoured to see every one of them. With some however she had not succeeded in this, on account of their superior activity and consequent frequency of absence from home. Two she had seen, but had abandoned in despair, as being too deaf, or stupid, or both, to flatter her with the least glimmerings of success. Another had absolutely frightened her away; having large goggling eyes, and a head that nodded like a Chinese Mandarin, and some gestures that betokened a little aberration of intellect. On the whole therefore there were but six, to whom it was necessary to apply myself; and of these I had already despatched four. Mrs. Holmes was next in order.

§ 2. MRS. HOLMES AND MRS. MILTON.

SHE had left Scotland in her early youth, to visit, I think, some relations in England; and her father and mother dying soon after her separation from them, without having made any provision for her support, she never returned thither. She once told me all the particulars of her history, but I have forgotten the greater part of them. However being reduced to much distress she married a person in an inferior station, with whom she removed from place to place, 'till at length they took up their abode in my parish, and kept some petty shop, and were always in very low circumstances. When I became acquainted with her, she was a widow of sixty-five years of age, with bad health, and in absolute distress; so that, as she had borne a good character during the whole of her residence here, I proposed to place her for the remainder of her days in the almshouses, to save her from the necessity of throwing herself upon the parish. But I found that she was a staunch Presbyterian by profession, and had a sort of pride in adhering to Presbyterian principles, as she thought; whilst in fact she was quite ignorant what Presbyterian principles were; except so far as related to Church government, and the mode of administering the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. To frequent the parish-church, and to communicate according to our forms, were absolutely indispensable in an alms-woman; and therefore she needed instruction and conviction before this desirable event could be accomplished.

In my first conversation with her, having this object in view, and trying to ascertain her opinions with precision, I inquired at once, if she were a Calvinist; to which question she replied without hesitation, that she was. But how great was my surprise, upon stating what Calvinism was, with the intention of afterwards refuting it, she seemed to be full of amazement and horror; and not only did she immediately disclaim such principles for herself, but doubted my veracity as to the principles themselves; and fancied indeed that I was endeavouring to impose upon her. Nor could I convince her of my fairness, until I showed her a book of Bishop Tomline's; in which there were several original sentences from Calvin, with a literal translation below. Upon this she yielded; and she used some strong expressions with respect to Calvin's doctrines, declaring them monstrous and even devilish; and that she could never bring herself to believe that such had been the doctrines of her own father, or of the Scotch Kirk.

This point then being happily got over, it only remained to reconcile her to our government by Bishops, and to our formularies of worship. In regard to the first, I stated the case in this manner. "Some persons perhaps will contend that we may adopt any form of church-government which may appear best suited to the times and circumstances of any country; others that we must establish every thing according to the model laid down by Christ and his Apostles; and this seems to be the safest and therefore the wisest opinion.

"According to the first opinion it would be impossible that any sort of uniformity should prevail, either in the whole Christian world, or in any particular country. There would be a constant changing every where; and some would like the changes, and some would not; and therefore would oppose and resist them; so that there would be perpetual quarrels amongst men, and wars and fighting instead of peace, and brotherly love, and unity.

"On the other hand, if men adhered to the model of Christ, and his Apostles, they would have in the very outset the wonderful comfort of knowing, that their government was of divine institution. For what Christ himself established carried with it as a matter of course divine authority; and the Apostles being under the guidance and direction of the Holy Ghost in every thing which they did for the settlement of the Church, their institutions also must be held to be divine. Building therefore upon this solid foundation, it was likely that the Church would be similarly governed throughout all nations and all ages, and would thus be at unity within herself, and withstand all the assaults of the wicked, devils or men, to the end of time.

"This way of reasoning must be allowed to be the justest and the best; and the only question would be, if a dispute should arise now, how to ascertain with sufficient certainty what *was* the model of Christ and his Apostles. Now this may be done in two methods; either by finding out from history what actually took place in the earliest times; or by going to the fountain-head of the Scriptures themselves, and putting together all the short notices, that are scattered about here and there, with reference to the subject of government.

"If you follow the first method, then you must allow the government by Bishops to be the proper one; for it may be traced to the very primitive ages of Christianity; and for 1500 years there was no other. All church-government of a different description from this is a modern invention, and therefore by probable argument not apostolical. For how could the government by Bishops have prevailed universally, as we know it did, from the very beginning, unless it had been instituted by the Apostles? It is not credible that the persons immediately succeeding the Apostles should have alter-

ed what the Apostles established; and consequently we cannot but conclude, that the Kirk, or any other Church not governed by Bishops, must give up the pretence of being founded upon the Apostolical model.

"However, following the other method, of looking to the Scriptures themselves for information, the defenders of the Kirk will assert, that their forefathers made a discovery unknown for 1500 years; namely, that there was nothing in those Scriptures, which, rightly interpreted, could warrant a government by Bishops, and so, to overturn such a government, they deluged their country in blood. I do not scruple to say, Mrs. Holmes, that their conduct was both arrogant, and wicked; arrogant, to assume that the whole of Christendom had been mistaken for 1500 years in supposing Episcopacy to be Apostolical; and wicked, to overthrow by fire and sword, instead of by argument and persuasion, what was by no means in its own nature, or of necessity, sinful. The reformation of Episcopacy was all that was wanted; not the extirpation of it.

"But let us see, whether we cannot find something in the New Testament, to justify all antiquity.

"First then tell me, what *they* were called, who were immediately under Christ, our head?" "I suppose you mean the Apostles, Sir," she answered. "I do undoubtedly," I said. "And what were *they* called, out of the whole body of whom Christ selected the twelve Apostles?" "Disciples I think," was her reply. "And now tell me next," I said, "whether you recollect, that upon any occasion Christ selected another portion out of the whole body for some particular object?" "I do very well," she answered; "you must mean the seventy." "Certainly," I said; "and what do you think of these seventy? Were they of the same rank and order with the Apostles?" "No indeed," she replied; "there is no reason to suppose it." "Very well," I said; "then you have two orders in Christ's own time, and instituted by Christ himself. And does it matter, think you, by what names they are distinguished from each other?" "No, Sir," she answered; "it does not seem to be of any importance."

"Well then," I said, "why may we not call those, who succeeded the Apostles, Bishops; and those, who succeeded the seventy, Priests or Presbyters? Do you see any harm in doing so?" "None, Sir, whatever;" she confessed at once. "Nor do I," I said; "and I am sure you remember the history of the first appointment of the Deacons as it is related in the book of the Acts." "To be sure, I do, Sir," was her answer. "Very well then," I said; "now we have got three orders of rulers in the church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. What would you have more?"

"Why, indeed, Sir," she replied; "this is very simple; and

might be sufficient for persons, who have not been brought up in other opinions; but if you would not think me too curious, or too bold, I should like to hear something more about it from Scripture.” “You shall then,” I said. “For though I think it very probable, that the ancients did actually model their Church-government on this plain foundation; yet I confess, that, if more Scripture proof can be had, the conviction and satisfaction of men’s minds at this day must needs be greater.

“The first thing then, which I remark, is this; that the office, into which Matthias was chosen in the place of Judas, is called a Bishopric; which properly means the charge of overlooking others. But it might be thought, until the contrary can be shown, that these others, over whom the charge was exercised, were only the great body of Christ’s flock, and not persons invested with ministerial authority; and that all such persons might still be equal, and exercise the same powers of overseers. I turn therefore to St. Paul’s Epistles to Timothy and Titus, whom we know to have been the first Bishops of Ephesus and Crete; it being probable, that something may be found there relating to a Bishop’s power. In the very third verse of the first Epistle to Timothy, I meet with an expression which appears to decide the question. For St. Paul says, that he besought Timothy to abide at Ephesus, ‘that he might charge some to teach no other doctrine.’ Therefore Timothy had clearly a power over other pastors, or ministers of the Gospel. Again, I observe in the first verse of the 5th chapter, this expression; ‘rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father;’ and in the 19th, ‘against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.’ Now these elders, at least those mentioned in the 19th verse, compared with the 17th, are the same as Presbyters, or Priests, and ministers of the Gospel; and you see that Timothy had the power of calling them to an account, and of passing censures upon them. In the 22d verse St. Paul tells him to ‘lay hands suddenly on no man;’ which shows that he had the peculiar power of ordination which is exercised by the Bishops of the present day. In the Epistle to Titus St. Paul says, that he left Titus in Crete to ‘set things in order, and to ordain Elders or Presbyters in every city, who might be able by the soundness of their doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers.’ So Titus also had the power of ordination.

“I shall only mention one circumstance more; but that a very remarkable one. In the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we find St. Paul exercising the very kind of power, which Bishops now exercise over their Clergy. He summons the Presbyters of Ephesus to meet him at Miletus; and he delivers to them an episcopal charge, full of admonitions and exhortations with regard to their momentous duties.

“Upon the whole therefore, without looking any further, we see distinct traces in Scripture of the title, the office, and the power of a Bishop, which, as we learn from history, came immediately afterwards into universal use. In short, there is no doubt but that James was Bishop of Jerusalem, Mark of Alexandria, and Clement of Rome, in the life-time of the Apostles; and what more can be required to prove an institution to be Apostolical, at this distant period, I cannot conceive.”

“I cannot pretend to contradict what you have said, Sir,” she replied; “and I would not wish to be thought obstinate.” “Obstinate people,” I continued, “will hold out against any evidence whatever, and ingenious people will always find reasons for contradiction. So they might in the present case; but what is sufficient for *you* is this; that, if it do not matter, whether church-government be of divine institution, or not, then you have no reason to object to a government by Bishops; which so far from being sinful, is attended with great advantages, and is of the most undoubted antiquity; and, on the other hand, if you would prefer a government of divine institution, there is good reason for thinking, that Episcopacy is such, both because it began in the times of the Apostles, and because there are evident traces of it in the Scriptures themselves. Upon these principles therefore you may safely submit yourself to the Church of England, so far as this point goes.”

“I will, Sir,” she said, “faithfully and sincerely; for your explanations are very clear, and my conscience is satisfied. Besides, I know very well, that I shall never have any opportunity of reading or talking with others, to unsettle me any more. If you are so kind as to put me into the Almshouses, there I shall be, and very contented too, for the rest of my life. And since there has been a talk about it, Sir, I have been studying your Prayer-Book; and I should be ashamed not to confess, that I think the services are most excellent in themselves, and such as any Christian person may join in to their great edification. I think too that it is better to provide such services, than to leave any thing to the discretion of the Minister. But with respect to the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, I observe, that you receive the bread and wine kneeling at the altar; whereas the Scotch receive them, according to Christ’s institution, sitting round a table, as if they were at a meal. Is not this better, Sir, as being like the first model?”

“It is not so like,” I replied, “as you may at first imagine, my good Mrs. Holmes. It was not the custom in those days to sit at meals, and therefore this sacrament was not administered at the first to persons sitting. But, at all events, I hope you will not find fault with a mode of administering it, which makes it so much more solemn and awful. After what St. Paul said about the danger of receiving it unworthily, and of the necessity of making

a most careful and serious preparation for it, I think that nothing should be allowed, which might have any tendency in the least degree to cause the ceremony to appear to be a light or trivial matter; or, that, when we eat and drink, we eat and drink common food. No; to show a due reverence for Christ's body and blood, what more proper thing can we do, than to receive them in the humblest posture upon our knees? The bread of life should not be received under common circumstances, but with every circumstance of godly fear."

She yielded at once to this explanation; and having been placed in the Almshouses, she has for many years been an unintermitting attendant at Church, and at the holy table. But the unknown Lady had now perplexed her understanding not a little; yet not so much as to shake her confidence in *me*.

The next day I went to her, and was welcomed heartily. The first thing which I heard was, that the Lady had not been there since my visit yesterday. In fact, she came amongst them no more. Mrs. Callender, who always listened to what she said with apparent due attention, whilst, in the mean time, she laughed in her sleeve, had been to the Lady's house for something that was promised her, and had mentioned, with much exaggeration, the long talking which she said I had had with some of the almswomen; and that I seemed to be greatly surprised and displeased that any other person should interfere with my duties. Whether this deterred her from interfering again, or whether, my vigilance being now aroused, she relinquished all hope of making a single convert, I do not know. I had been meditating upon the propriety of writing to her; but it was soon evident that writing was unnecessary, she herself having voluntarily ceased to endeavour to introduce those dangerous opinions, which I was bound by my ordination vow to endeavour to expel.

But to return to the subject immediately before me. "Mrs. Holmes," I said, "do you think that God's knowledge is of so vast an extent, that he knows every thing before it comes to pass? We call his knowledge infinite; but it could not be so, if it were limited to the past and the present. However, it is a most wonderful thing to be able to foreknow all circumstances apparently depending upon the merest accidents."

It is indeed, Sir," she answered; "but without doubt God can do it." "You are right," I continued; "and now tell me whether his foreknowing what you and I are about to do will be the cause of our doing what we do, whatever it may be." "I should think not," she replied. "Suppose," I said, "that you foreknew what Mrs. Milton, your next door neighbour, would do at one o'clock this very day; would *that* make her do it?" "No, indeed," she exclaimed; "I *do* know very well what she will be doing at that

time; she will be at dinner; but my knowing it has nothing to do with *her* doing it."

"Very well," I said, "then you can perfectly understand, that God may foreknow every thing with respect to all mankind, in all ages, and yet that men themselves may always act according to their own free will." "I do, Sir," she replied. "In short," I said, "it is their doing the things, which makes God foreknow them; it is not God's foreknowing which makes men do them."

Here she did not seem exactly to comprehend me, so I asked her, "if God could foreknow things which were never done?" "No, indeed," she answered; "there is no sense in that idea." "Then," I said, "if there were nothing done, there would be nothing foreknown; but whatever is done is foreknown by such a being as God; and you see now, I suppose, that he foreknows it, because it will be done; but his foreknowledge does not cause it to be done." "I see it, Sir," she replied, "more clearly than I did." "Then," I said, "you will have less difficulty in future to reconcile the foreknowledge of God with the free will of man. But we will proceed a step further.

"If God did nothing more than foreknew every thing, and rested quietly in that foreknowledge, and suffered all men to do what they pleased during their whole lives, although he might reward and punish them in the next world according to their actions in this, yet this world could hardly be said to be under his government, could it?" "No, Sir," she answered; "I do not see that it could." "Besides," I said, "our Bibles positively assert the fact, that he *does* govern all things by his providence, and therefore he not only foreknows, but in some way or other he acts also."

"He must indeed," she replied. "And suppose," I said, "that in considering beforehand what is likely to be for the good of his creatures, he should determine to bring to pass a certain event at a certain time; this would be going a great way beyond foreknowing, would it not?" "Certainly," she answered; "and pray, Sir, does not to predestinate mean this?" "Yes," I said; "*that* is the simple meaning of the word; namely, to determine in his own secret counsels, or to decree, or to appoint, if you will, at any time before, that he will accomplish something hereafter; like the call of the Gentiles, for example. But we now commonly use the word in controversy, since Calvin's time, only with reference to the eternal salvation or perdition of individual men. You will perhaps understand all these words better, if I explain them one immediately after the other. Foreknowledge is the knowledge of every thing beforehand; providence is the same, with this addition, namely, a care and concern for every thing; and predestination embraces both, but is limited in its usual sense and application to mankind alone;

and to *them* it is applied only so far as regards their everlasting condition, and the steps leading to it."

"Thank you, Sir," she exclaimed; "thank you a thousand times, for the trouble which you are taking to unravel my perplexities. I am ready now to go on." "Very well," I said, "attend then;" and my tone naturally rose above the tone of conversation.

"Our great Heavenly Father, from the foundations of the world, looking with his *foreknowledge* through the numerous ages which were to succeed each other to the end of time; he saw at one glance, the future being present to *him*, the actions and the hearts of all men; he beheld some, like Abraham, whose faith he deemed worthy of being imputed to them for righteousness; he beheld others, like Cornelius, whose prayers and whose alms would come up for a memorial before him; others again, who like Zaccheus, in token of penitence, would make fourfold restitution for past extortions, and sacrifice half their riches to feed the poor; and others in the deepest sorrow and self-debasement, like the Magdalen, bedewing her Saviour's feet with her tears, and wiping them with her hair. At once his *providence*, which is over all his works, was especially interested on the behalf of those, who, in the midst of crooked and perverse generations, would pursue the paths of rectitude, and walk in the great laws of reason and nature, and shine as lights in a benighted and ruined world; or on the behalf of sinners, no longer sinners, but with broken and contrite hearts humbling themselves before him, obeying their Redeemer's call to repentance, and imploring pardon in his name. Then comes the positive act of *predestination*; he decrees in his secret plans of wisdom and goodness; he determines immutably and irreversibly, that he will provide for all such persons, enduring faithfully to the end, a blissful and glorious haven of rest in the heavens; he appoints the train of causes, in his government of the world, by which their faith and their virtue, or the sincerity of their repentance, may be tried and illustrated; he pre-ordains, in short, that in their several ages they shall be enrolled amongst the members of the Church of Christ; that the Holy Spirit shall assist their endeavours after godliness; that *they* shall be justified before him; that they shall be finally glorified.

"This is the doctrine of our 17th Article, and this is indeed a doctrine, my good Mrs. Holmes, which, whilst it is consistent with all the perfections of God, cannot but be wonderfully comfortable to every true Christian, under the vicissitudes and troubles of life. For, being conscious to themselves that they are growing in piety, and every Christian grace and virtue, they are assured that they are directed by the Holy Spirit; that the great work of their sanctification is going on; and that after *they* have suffered here with Christ, God's eternal purpose of saving all such Christians will be

fulfilled in *them*, to their everlasting glory and happiness. What think you of this, Mrs. Holmes?"

"I think it very delightful, Sir," she answered; "and, what I did not expect, I think it very plain too; but why should they make such a clamour about this doctrine of predestination, Sir, or disagree about it in any way?" "Oh!" I said, "predestination is not explained by all persons as I now explain it to *you*. Calvin did not so explain it, and many follow the opinions of Calvin; and then they are forced to admit all those terrible consequences, which you were so much shocked at some years ago; the sum of which is, that God determined originally, with respect to every individual human being, whom he would save and whom he would damn, before they were born, by an arbitrary decree, without any regard to men themselves, or their faith, or their actions and character, be they what they might."

"This is terrible indeed, Sir," she replied; "but is not all Scripture against it?" "I think so certainly," I said; "and I am sure, that if this doctrine were true, all Scripture would be useless; nay, what is worse, it would be a mockery both of God and man. Does not God say, over and over again, in different words, by the mouth of holy inspired prophets, that he wishes all men to be saved?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "and I should like to know how the Lady would explain *that*."

"I will tell you," I said. "God does indeed wish all men to be saved, but he denies the means of salvation to all whom he has predestinated to everlasting destruction in hell."

She lifted up her hands in amazement, and shuddered at the impious notion, as she thought it; and cried out, "this is mocking with a vengeance, Sir! why, if a *man* were to act in this manner; to say one thing, and to intend the very contrary; yea, to say one thing whilst he knows that he has resolved to do the very contrary; should we not call him a base deceitful wretch? What ignorance and blindness, Sir, or what wickedness must this be, to make God liable to human failings?"

"Very true, Mrs. Holmes," I said; I agree with you perfectly; and I ask you this also, Does not God promise in the Scriptures pardon and remission of sins to all sinners who believe and repent?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied, "in almost every page; *that* is the very thing which I supposed the Gospel to mean; and glad tidings they were indeed, and a vast encouragement to sinners to fly to their Saviour and to reform their lives. But what are we to think of it now, Sir?"

"Oh!" I said, "this is another mockery. God makes this promise to sinners; but another promise of the necessary grace for the producing of faith and repentance, he makes to those only whom he chose in the beginning, by an arbitrary selection, and predestinated

to eternal life." "Why, Sir," she answered, "this is downright quibbling and fraud. To make one promise in secret, to overturn another made publicly! Can God do such things as these? God forbid, Sir!"

"So say I, Mrs. Holmes; and now," I continued, "you must see the use of that caution which is placed at the end of the Article, that we should receive God's promises in such wise as they are generally set forth in holy Scripture. Undoubtedly we should so receive them; and therefore if God promise pardon to the penitent and believing, which he does again and again, I am fully confident that it is impossible for all sinners to become penitent and believers; and, consequently, that no sentence of predestination to eternal punishment has gone out against any but those, with respect to whom, he foreknows that they will reject all the means of grace, which in the exercise of his providence he will offer them. Again, when God says that he would have all men to be saved, which cannot be denied; I am fully confident, that every thing will be done consistently with infinite wisdom and justice, which might be sufficient to ensure that desirable event. But I do not expect that God should alter his eternal laws, or the whole course of his righteous proceedings, to bring about the salvation of incorrigible, impenitent, unbelieving sinners. God, without any impeachment of his sincerity, or of any of his great attributes, may say, that he wishes all men to be saved, although he may have determined from the beginning that he will punish everlastingly as many as reject his gracious invitations to faith, and repentance."

"I can understand all this very well," said Mrs. Holmes; "and all that I now want to know, Sir, is, what pretence the Calvinists have for their strange method of explanation. I presume, Sir, they have something to say for it, good or bad, wise or foolish."

"Yes," I said. "They assert, that it would be a lessening of God's dominion and glory to suppose, that any event could possibly come to pass, without having been absolutely appointed by himself. Nor do we think that any event *can* take place against *his* supreme will, when he chooses to execute it; but we believe him voluntarily to have established a dominion of that sort, which leaves to men a certain measure of freedom, in consequence of which they are not like the brute beasts, but accountable for what they do to *him*, who gave them their various faculties, and placed them in a state of trial for the right or wrong exercise of those faculties. If God chose a dominion of this sort, and makes it his rule to govern mankind upon this system, then it is no lessening of his dominion and glory, to suppose that he does not govern by any other rule."

"Very true, Sir," she replied, "and I am sure this system is better than the other. But is this all Sir?" "No," I said; "they cannot reconcile God's providence with the free will of man at any

rate; and therefore, to magnify God's providence, they destroy man's free will, and make all his actions necessary, so that he is no better than your spinning-wheel. We, on the contrary, allow to the fullest extent, that God, in his Government of the world, controls the actions of men; yet we maintain as decidedly the freedom of the human will. How these two things consist in all cases, we do not pretend to explain. How God controls mankind, without usually preventing them from acting freely, is one of the numberless mysteries that will be for ever hidden in the secrets of the Godhead."

"Yes, Sir," she answered; "we need not stumble at *this*, when there are so many things of which we know nothing, and of which we should be glad to be informed. Is there any thing more, Sir?"

"Yes," I said, "they quote Scripture; and therefore, if you like, I will explain to you all the passages of Scripture, wherein the words predestination and predestinated are used." "Oh! yes, Sir," she exclaimed, "I should like it of all things. But will it not give you a great deal of trouble?" "Not so much," I said, "as you may imagine; for the passages are very few. They occur only in the 8th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and in the 1st of his Epistle to the Ephesians."

She gave me her Bible, and I opened first to the fifth verse of the first Chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians; and I read the verse itself; and then I said, "as *I* understand this passage, (and it seems sufficiently clear) nothing more is meant, than that God had determined in the beginning to make Christians of the Gentiles of Ephesus. They were predestinated, you see, unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ. Now they might have been appointed to this distinction, either because there was a peculiar fitness about them for being amongst the earliest Gentile Christians; or, if you will, in an arbitrary manner; that is, the call of the Gentiles to Christianity must begin somewhere, and so God selected Ephesus, with other cities; first to hear the word and to embrace it. In the same manner, when it was necessary to select some one nation to preserve all the previous notices of Christianity, God selected the Jews. Let the selection have been as arbitrary as you please, in this sense; yet what of that? Neither this case, nor the other, furnish any ground for the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. But the selection of the Jews does not seem to have been altogether arbitrary. The distinction of being the Father of the Jewish nation was bestowed upon Abraham as a reward. This we are positively told in his history. Jacob was perhaps chosen in preference to Esau, in an arbitrary manner. But what has this to do with predestination to life eternal? Jacob was predestinated, or appointed, only to hold a certain temporal rank, which must have been held by somebody. This was all that was arbitrary. His eternal salvation rested on other foundations.

“Again, the rejection of the Jews was not arbitrary, but the just consequence of their monstrous sins. This we know from prophecy, and from the history which fulfilled it. God, no doubt, foreknew their wickedness, and in consequence appointed their merited doom; but at the same time he appointed that good should spring out of evil, and that *their* fall should be the rise of the Gentiles.

“But I am wandering from our texts. At the 11th verse we have the word again; and I am not quite certain to whom it applies. If to the Ephesians, then the sense of it is the same as before; if to the Jews, it means that God had determined from the beginning, not to reject the whole Jewish nation, but to admit a foreknown pious remnant of them to the privileges of the new covenant in Christ; if to St. Paul himself, it implies that he was pre-ordained to be a special Minister of the Gospel according to God’s eternal plan; either, because God foreknew his fitness for such an office, and what force would be added to the Christian evidences by the conversion of such a man; or, in an arbitrary manner, which might very well be the case, without affording any ground for Calvinistic predestination.

“If God determine at a certain time to introduce a certain dispensation, he must have the proper instruments ready, must he not?” “To be sure he must,” she replied. “Well then,” I said, “if so, he must either raise them up at the moment, and endue them with the fit qualities, by an extraordinary act of his providence; or he must fix the precise time for his work, when such instruments will be in existence. In whatever way this was done with respect to St. Paul, his eternal salvation was not a necessary consequence; he was admitted to all the privileges of the Christian covenant, and became an eminent Preacher of the Gospel; but nevertheless it was possible for him, by an abuse of his great endowments, to have been a cast-away, or reprobate, as the word is generally translated. What has all this therefore to do with Calvinism?” “Nothing whatever, Sir, that I can see,” she answered. “Very well then,” I said, “we will go now to the Epistle to the Romans.

“I read, for your further information, from the 28th verse of the 8th chapter, to the end. The word ‘predestinate,’ occurs twice, you observe; namely, in the 29th and 30th verses. You see also, by the context, that the Church at Rome was in a state of deep affliction; it was assailed with persecution, with famine, and with the sword; it behoved St. Paul therefore to comfort the members of that Church in their distress; to confirm them in their faith; and to raise their thoughts triumphant over their sufferings, that they might endure stedfastly to the end. To effect this, he might have said to them, as he says in another passage, ‘If ye suffer with Christ here, then may ye be confident of being glorified with him hereafter;’ he might have said to them, as our Lord himself did to

his followers, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall persecute you for *my* sake; rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' And what he *did* say to them in this place was not very different. He puts them in mind, that all persons, to whom it hath pleased divine providence that the Gospel should be preached, and who have accepted and obeyed that Gospel, and persevere under every calamity with faith unshaken to love God, and to trust in him, shall hereafter, by his eternal appointment, be formed after the image of his Son Jesus Christ, become the children of the resurrection, and rise with spiritual and incorruptible bodies like his, to the life eternal in the heavens; shall, in short, be justified and glorified; acquitted at Christ's tribunal, and crowned with the glorious crown of immortality.

"This is the simple meaning of the passage; and to derive that comfort from it, which it is calculated to give, the Romans had to consider whether they were in the circumstances pointed out by the Apostle; for the declaration is a general one, and applies to all who are in such circumstances. No doubt then that the Gospel had been preached at Rome by an especial providence, and in execution of a plan fixed from the beginning; for the Lord stood by Paul, when he was in prison at Jerusalem, and told him, 'that he must bear witness to him at Rome. So it was also in the case of other cities. On one occasion particularly, when Paul, if left to himself, would have gone into Bithynia, he was directed by a vision to go into Macedonia. Without question it was for the furtherance of the Gospel that the Macedonians and the Romans were selected to hear it before other nations to whom the Apostle might have preached it; and this perhaps was the cause of the selection in the divine counsels. But to the people themselves it was an act of free grace; and they might justly consider themselves as called according to God's eternal purpose, which was an earnest of the fulfilment of every promise dependent upon that high calling; so that if they abided in his love, holding fast their faith to the end, they would then be entitled to all the unspeakable privileges of the new covenant; sanctification, justification, glorification. Need I say more, Mrs. Holmes?"

"No, Sir," she answered; "I understand your explanation, and I am satisfied with it; and I see nothing here of the predestination of Calvin, which made me shudder so much when I first heard of it." "It is very true," I said; "it is not to be found here. Set yourself at ease. The only predestination that you need think of, is, that God has immutably determined to save all sincere Christians; and, if *you* are a sincere Christian, and feel within yourself those evidences of it, which our Article points out, namely, the mortification of your earthly members, and the drawing up of your mind to high and heavenly things; then are you most assuredly amongst

the predestinate to life. Good morning to you! I must now go to Mrs. Milton."

The door was close to that of Mrs. Holmes. I knocked, and was desired to come in. Mrs. Milton was infirm, and rose from her chair with some difficulty to do me honour. When I had helped to reseate her, and had inquired after her health, I said, "Mrs. Milton, you have seen this strange Lady, of whom I have heard so much; have you not?"

"Yes, Sir," she answered, "I have seen her twice, and I hope to see her again very often. She is a nice Lady, Sir, indeed; and, what is more, she is a pious woman, and a serious Christian, Sir." "Piety towards God, and seriousness in our Christian profession, are much to be commended," I said. "Had you a great deal of talk with her?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "a great deal." "Oh! very well," I said; "I am glad to hear it; because I think you will be able to give me an exact account of her opinions. Some of your neighbours here could not understand her; and so, I suppose, they have made wild work of her speeches to them. At least they have told me very extraordinary things."

"Ah! poor illiterate creatures," she exclaimed, with a scornful countenance; "they know nothing, Sir. And how should they? They have no education; their God is their belly, Sir; and they are in the gall of bitterness!" "Oh! Mrs. Milton," I said; "I think much better of them than you seem to do; and I am sure, that some of them are far advanced in practical religion, which is the main point, for aged persons especially. But we will have done with this. I want to know how your acquaintance with the Lady began."

"I will tell you, Sir," she answered. "It looked rather odd at first. She knocked at my door, Sir, as *you* did a few minutes ago; and when I called out to her to come in, she opened the door, and just showed her face, and inquired if any body was living there that knew Christ. To be sure I was a little startled at such a question, and thought it very strange; so I answered cautiously, I hope so Madam; but after a while I bid her come in and take a chair."

"So then," I said; "you entered immediately into conversation with her, I suppose." "Yes, Sir," she replied; "I was so bold as to ask her name, and where she lived; upon which she told me where she lived, but she did not mention her name; observing that we should find it out in time, as she was come to stay in the Parish for some months, and intended to be often at the Alms-houses, and would be very glad to be useful to us all, if she could." "Well," I said, "you thanked her, no doubt, for her kindness." "I did, Sir," she answered; "and then she went on to tell me that she had the spiritual welfare of her fallen wretched fellow-creatures most at heart; and that she felt a strong call within her to go amongst them,

and see whether they were sitting in darkness, or whether the marvellous light of the Gospel were shining around them; and that with such a view she had come here first. And so, Sir, I thought this was a very charitable work to the souls of men; and I told her, that I hoped God would bless her endeavours."

"But were you not," I asked, "somewhat too hasty, my good Mrs. Milton?" "How so, Sir?" she inquired eagerly. "Why," I said, "you did not know yet what her sentiments might be, and what she meant by darkness and light; and then the odd way in which she came to you, and her talking of a call, were very suspicious circumstances, and should have made you pause before you bid her God speed. Besides, you must be aware, that the spiritual affairs of this Parish have been committed to *me* by the law of the land, and the institutions of our Church; and therefore you should have asked her, whether she had my concurrence in what she was about to undertake. Another thing also you should have recollected, that St. Paul in his Epistles is very strong and decisive against the meddling of women in these matters. It seems that they began to meddle very early, even to such a degree as many silly women pretending a call do now; that is, to speak in the Church itself, in the presence of the congregation; but St. Paul said, 'let your women keep silence in the Churches;' and again, with more vehemence, 'it is a shame for women to speak in the Church.' Women were to be learners only, as the Apostle thought, and not teachers; and therefore he says in another place, 'let the women learn in silence with all subjection; but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man; but to be in silence. And if they would learn any thing,' he says again, 'let them ask their husbands at home;' it being their duty to be always under obedience. You see then the judgment of St. Paul upon this matter; and you must remember that he gave these admonitions before countries were parcelled out into parishes, and ministers appointed, by the laying on of hands, to take care of them; but at a time when a wide field was open, without limit or restriction, for the labours of the husbandmen, and when the Spirit was bestowed in an extraordinary manner; and when labourers were actually called by that Spirit to gather in the harvest; that is, to convert the Heathens to Christianity. What would he have said now, then, if he had lived in this age, and had been told of a woman going about, and entering into the private houses of Christian families, and perplexing the understandings of the ignorant with difficult questions, and unsettling the faith of the most aged, in which they have been brought up, and lived for so many years, and setting them against their ministers? Would he not have said, that it was overstepping all the bounds of decency, and the surest way to destroy all that order and peace, which he was so anxious to establish in every church?"

Mrs. Milton was confounded by the earnestness of my tone, and by this long train of objections to the Lady's conduct; but she was secretly prepossessed in her favour, and would have gladly defended her if she could. In fact, before she became an alms-woman by my appointment, she had been a professed Methodist herself, and had belonged to a Calvinistic branch of them; and I suspected, although she was one of the most regular attendants at Church and Sacrament, that she had never renounced any of their opinions. Much of their phraseology she tenaciously retained, and it brought her into a readier and closer contact with the strange Lady. With all the learning, however, which she had acquired in her former occupation of a school-mistress, upon which she prided herself so highly, and from the lofty towers of which she looked down with contempt upon the other alms-women, as an inferior race; like the Pharisee of old upon the poorer Jews; with all this learning and self-conceit, she had no correct understanding of her own phrases, but only used them instinctively, or by habit; and seemed, I thought, to attribute a sort of saving character to the mere use of them. With texts of scripture she was well furnished; but she had no power of putting them side by side, and of extracting from the comparison one consistent doctrine. Of the authority of the Church, and of the ordering of her ministers, and of the succession of them in direct descent from the Apostles, she knew nothing; and therefore, in her younger days, when her strength enabled her, she ran after every self-constituted preacher, who pretended a call by the Spirit; considering *that* to be the best ground of authority over others. Yet she assumed to herself the privilege of judging all, under whom she sat, whether moved by the Spirit or not; and her censures were always barbed with a peculiar malignity. In truth, she was reckoned to be a very ill-tempered woman; and, whether she tried to cure her ill-temper or not, I cannot say; but certainly she never succeeded to her dying day. If you talked to her about good works, she said they were all filthy rags. It was her favourite phrase, and continually in her mouth; yet in her heart she was completely Pharisaical; and often indeed she openly extolled herself and her good works, and triumphed in comparing them with the failings of her neighbours. In her own opinion, in short, she was a chosen vessel, and sanctified unto salvation; she was already sealed by the divine decree, and could not be lost, come what may. Others were reprobates.

Such was Mrs. Milton, without overcharging the portrait. I had myself been completely deceived in her. She had written to me one of the most pathetic letters imaginable, in consequence of which I became acquainted with her; and in due time, observing her uncommon regularity at Church, I placed her among the alms-women. From the period of this event her character declined ra-

pidly in my estimation. She took to drinking spirits, as was reported; to *me* she was very ungrateful; and with all her colleagues she was involved in perpetual quarrels. She had not a friend amongst them; and she incited *them* to break their friendship with each other. At length she became bed-ridden, and quarrelling as a matter of course with every person whom I sent to her assistance; and none of her own family coming near her, she was of necessity moved into the poor-house, where she lingered for some years in a helpless condition, still hating, and hated by all, but still assured of her own salvation.

However, at the time of the Lady's visits, we were not apparently upon very bad terms. I had been under the necessity of rebuking her now and then; chiefly for quarrelling. Her next-door neighbour, Mrs. Holmes, she had a particular spite against; and there were two things which she always cast in her teeth; one, that she belonged to the Scotch nation, who had basely betrayed and sold their king, the martyr, Charles the First; the other, that there had been a subscription for her, or gathering, as she called it, to enable her to take possession of her apartments; whereas she, Mrs. Milton, had abundance of furniture of her own, and had entered independently. I mention this circumstance to show the spirit of the woman. Still I had hopes of her; and I foresaw that my conversation with her, in respect to the unknown Lady, would supply me with an admirable opportunity of combating her opinions, and of endeavouring, as I fervently wished, to amend her heart and principles. I sought the conversation, therefore, with the greater eagerness.

Her reply to my charge against the Lady was, that the other ignorant old women must have misunderstood her; but that perhaps she would have done better, if she had left them to their incurable blindness and nakedness. "But who will find fault with her zeal, Sir?" she said. "She pitied their seemingly lost state, and her spirit was stirred within her to try to rescue them from it; and the Spirit of God bore witness with her own spirit, that the attempt should be made. Was it for her, Sir, to resist the Holy Ghost?"

"Two things," I answered, "are here assumed, Mrs. Milton. How did it appear to her that *they* were in a lost state; and that *she* herself was under the extraordinary influence of the Holy Ghost?" "Why, Sir," she said, "this elect Lady felt the Spirit sensibly dwelling and working within her; and the old women informed her that nothing of the sort had ever happened to themselves. Therefore, you know, Sir, they are yet in a lost state; dead and buried; and nothing but the extraordinary workings of the Spirit, producing a new birth, can raise them out of it."

"Here is another difficulty started," I said. "You call the Lady elect, I should think, in some peculiar signification; but we will talk of that presently. I want now to understand better how

the Lady was assured of the sensible indwelling and working of the Spirit." "Oh! Sir," she replied, with rather an air of pity, "it is very easy to be distinguished by those who have it. He makes himself known, Sir. I feel him now myself *here*, Sir," she exclaimed with prodigious energy and enthusiasm, rising from her chair, and striking her breast.

Mrs. Milton having stood up for an instant, and having repeated the same assertion, sat down again. She shook all over, like an aspen-leaf. She had never expressed herself to me so openly and decidedly before; I was glad that she had now done it voluntarily; and I was determined, if possible, to compel her to explore the matter carefully to the very bottom. I said, therefore, "Mrs. Milton, I am struck with a sort of reverential awe, when I hear you speak in that manner. What you suppose to have been vouchsafed to you from heaven, if it come indeed from thence, is something very wonderful, if not miraculous, and must have important consequences in view."

"No doubt, Sir," she answered, "it is the sweet and pleasant token of my adoption in Christ. *That* is the important consequence to *me*. But it is not so wonderful, Sir," or uncommon; at least all who are saved must experience it, as I do." "Very well," I said; "then it is the more necessary that we should make no mistake about it. For the Spirit working within us, if not merely our own imagination, might be a bad Spirit, or a good Spirit; and if a bad Spirit, then he may urge us to do such things that after death we may lift up our eyes in hell, being in torments, instead of opening them upon the bliss and glory of heaven."

"I see no danger, Sir," she replied, "of any mistake; at least in my own case." "I do not know," I said, "what danger there may be in *your* case, Mrs. Milton; but I am quite sure, that, in general, there must be very great danger. You cannot have forgotten that text of Scripture, which tells us, 'that the devil goeth about continually, seeking whom he may devour;' and I cannot conceive a more likely method, by which he might deceive us to our destruction, than by transforming himself into an angel of light, and filling our fancy with a notion that we are all along directed by the Spirit of God. Besides, you, who are so well read in the Scriptures, know perfectly, that they warn us not to believe every Spirit; but to try the Spirits, whether they be of God. It is quite clear, therefore, that there must be false spirits; and also, for our comfort, that there is a way of discerning between the false and the true. You are acquainted with history too, Mrs. Milton, and therefore you know the fact, that the greatest enormities have been committed by men, who believed that they were acting under the influence of God's Spirit, whereas it was their own heated imagination, which hurried them on to mischief; or very likely the devil himself; for they did his works. You remember those Scriptures, Mrs.

Milton, and the horrible histories of the Antinomians, and more especially the wicked time of Charles the First; do you not?"

"I do, Sir," she answered; flattered by this appeal to her knowledge, and therefore the more disposed to admit my doctrine; "but I hope you do not think, Sir, that I could be deceived in that manner." "No," I said, "Mrs. Milton; I do not think that you could be so far deceived, as to be guilty of *their* crimes; but you might perhaps be led on, almost without perceiving it, to entertain opinions detrimental to your salvation, and to neglect duties of the utmost importance to it. I will help you, therefore, if you please, to try this spirit, by which you suppose yourself to be moved."

"Very well, Sir," she replied, rather contemptuously; "you may examine me as much as you think proper." "I do it only for your own good," I said; "so tell me, if you can, more precisely what it is that you feel; or what it is that you are urged by the feeling to think and do." She was silent for a moment, and then collecting her whole mind, and knitting her brow, and fixing her glaring eyes upon me, and protruding her lips, with the air of one about to pour forth an oracular response, at length she burst out in the following words: "I feel as if I were all soul, and could escape the body, and leave it behind! I feel as if I could take wings, and soar aloft into Paradise, to hear unspeakable words, and to see my blessed Redeemer, face to face! I feel; I am assured, that I am a vessel made to honour; one of those for whom alone Christ died; one of those, who are called according to God's eternal purpose; and predestinated to everlasting life."

Here she stopped, but her fervour still animated her countenance, and spoke in her eye. I waited till it had somewhat subsided, and then I said, "I must freely confess, Mrs. Milton, that I think much of what you have told me very doubtful matter; and I should have been a great deal better pleased to have found that your feelings urged you on to something practical; namely, to add to your faith, virtue; and to knowledge, temperance; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. St. John, after bidding us try the spirit, to ascertain his true character, gives us this admirable test: 'He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.' By these Scriptures, Mrs. Milton, I form my judgment; and I hoped that you would have told me, that your whole heart and spirit, like the Spirit of God, breathed love and charity towards all mankind, and especially towards your kindred and neighbours; that you were labouring to root out of your bosom every particle of envy, malice, and animosity, and to cultivate meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, the loveliest of the Christian graces and virtues, and the most opposite to

the spirit of the world; and that, with all the flame of heavenly desires, you were aspiring after heavenly purity and holiness; purifying yourself, day by day, as Christ is pure; becoming holy, day by day, as God is holy. If these had been your tendencies, I would have acknowledged at once the certain influence of the Spirit of God; but, instead of these, I see nothing but the confirmation of dangerous opinions in religion; or very vague, and wandering, and useless speculations; such, in short, as I might have expected to meet with in a person of crazed intellect, (which is not *your* case, Mrs. Milton;) and nothing like the blessed effects of the inward workings of the Holy Ghost."

She could bear me no longer. I had observed indeed, for some moments, that she curbed her temper with the utmost difficulty; and I expected a storm whenever I should cease. "What!" she exclaimed, interrupting me, "does not our Article say, that the Spirit draws up the mind to high and heavenly things? And are not those the things which now swell my thoughts, and raise me, as it were, to heaven itself?"

"No, indeed, Mrs. Milton," I said, seizing the moment when she paused from agitation, and want of breath; "no, these are not exactly what the Article means; but, if they were, you must recollect, that the Article couples another thing with them, which should go with them hand in hand, and without which, in fact, no man will ever be fit for heaven." "And what is *that*, Sir?" she inquired impatiently. "It is the mortification of the works of the flesh, and of our earthly members," I answered; "it is the purging away of our old sins, and the being fruitful in all those graces, and virtues, which I mentioned before; of which St. Peter says, 'that he who lacketh them is blind, and cannot see afar off; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.' Knowing, therefore, as I do, Mrs. Milton, that you are unhappily very deficient in many of these excellent virtues, especially in that essential Christian grace of charity, without which even faith itself will avail nothing; I must tell you candidly that so far from thinking you under the extraordinary influence of God's Spirit, I tremble for your condition."

Here I saw that she was ready to burst with rage; but still conscience-struck, as I thought, (for what I had said was undeniable, and must have pierced to the quick;) she bridled her tongue, although an unruly member, and persevered in a restless silence. So I continued. "I do not mention your faults, Mrs. Milton, solely to give you pain; but with the same view that St. Paul reproved the Corinthians; to bring you to a godly sorrow, and to a due Christian humility. Humility indeed becomes us all; but it becomes those especially who have yet so much to acquire of holiness and charity. In fact you have begun at the wrong end. You have worked yourself up, by dwelling perpetually in your thoughts on the Calvinistic

doctrine of predestination, which I do not scruple to call an impious doctrine,—you have worked yourself up to the vain imagination, that you are sealed for heaven by an eternal decree, and that nothing can defeat it; the consequence of which is, that your notions of yourself are ridiculously exalted; that you despise all your neighbours who are not supposed to be gifted with the same grand privilege, and that you neglect the narrow and difficult road, along which the rest of us are toiling towards the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. If this wrong method of proceeding be not abandoned, it will lead to a most dangerous downfall. When your heated imagination cools, and you examine yourself with a severe impartiality, and discover that you are naked of those virtues without which no man shall see the Lord, without which heaven would be no heaven to any man, and therefore unattainable; when you find this, then perhaps you will be tempted to rush into the other extreme, to reckon yourself amongst the reprobates, and I shudder to mention it, like your poor friends, Mrs. Bellamy and Mrs. Simpkins, to plunge into the bottomless depths of despair, and to lay violent hands upon herself. No, no! The only safe method of proceeding for us all is this; to strive to be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect, and as Christ commanded us; conforming daily more and more to the beautiful pattern which he himself set us; denying all ungodliness, and every irregular appetite; walking religiously in the paths of justice, mercy, humility; and zealous of every good work. If we proceed in this manner, and are conscious within ourselves that we are advancing progressively in our love towards God and man; then may we cheer the labours and the perils of our Christian warfare with the delightful reflection, that we are in truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and embraced within the divine decree, which predestinates to eternal life all the faithful and obedient followers of Jesus Christ. This would be to begin at the right end, and would infallibly conduct us to heaven. Be calm, my good Mrs. Milton; be calm, I entreat you. Our souls are at stake upon this question; let us argue it coolly and dispassionately, which is the only way to arrive at truth. Were I not anxious for your present and future welfare, I would leave you to yourself; but, you see, I do not leave you; be as kind to yourself, as I would be to you.”

Here I paused. My antagonist had been in a high fever of irritation during the greater part of the time that I was speaking; but the conclusion soothed her. It appeared to me to be absolutely necessary to lay bare her failings, and yet to induce her to prolong the conversation; which was an affair of no small nicety. Once or twice I thought that all was lost, when I had ventured to strike hard and home; and I doubted whether I had adopted the wisest mode of endeavouring to convince her of her errors; but a little well-timed expression of concern for her everlasting good restored a certain de-

gree of amicable feeling, and prevented her from breaking up the conversation in wrath.

On the present occasion she replied in a pathetic tone, "O that Christ would snatch me out of this howling wilderness?" "Yes indeed," I interposed immediately; "to be with Christ would be far better; but if he were to call you *now*, what time or opportunity would you have to amend those failings?" "Ah! Sir," she answered; "I feel myself like the poor scape-goat; all the sins of all these slanderous old women are heaped up on *my* head, and I am forced to bear them all. But I must make bold to say, Sir, that I do not approve your doctrine; because in my mind it is not the Gospel. Yours, Sir, is a doctrine of works; but salvation is a free gift, and belongs only to those, for whom God has prepared it before the foundations of the world were laid. Every thing is known unto God from the beginning; and he says by the mouth of St. Paul, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. His own supreme will, which cannot be changed by man, has decided every thing; and thus alone could he fully manifest his power and glory. We are all in his hands, like clay in the hands of the potter; he moulds us as he will; some to honour, some to dishonour."

She would have run on, but I exclaimed, "Stop, Mrs. Milton, stop for a moment, if you will be so kind, I beg of you. I have a word to say to those passages of Scripture which you have quoted, and the sense of which, I think, you have entirely mistaken." "How so, Sir?" she inquired, with a little impatience; "I should like to know what other sense you can put upon them, which is more plain and reasonable."

"Attend then," I said, "patiently; and you shall hear. I will give you the true sense, as I think, and as the learned think; a sense much more plain, and much more reasonable than yours. You are aware, I suppose, that St. Paul takes this passage about the potter from the 18th chapter of the Prophet Jeremiah; and without doubt he uses it in the same sense that the Prophet did. Should you suppose he would use it differently?" She allowed that it was not probable. "Very well then," I said; "give me your Bible, that I may read the whole passage to you, text and context. Oh! yonder it is. Sit you still; I will reach it in a moment."

Having found the Bible, and having opened the chapter in question, I read the first ten verses; and then I asked her whether the Prophet was commissioned, or not, to threaten destruction to the Jews, if they persisted in their evil ways? "To be sure he was," she answered. I asked again, whether it was the destruction of the Jews, as a nation, that was intended, or the eternal destruction of individuals, body and soul, in hell? She would have contested this point with me; but I read her again the four verses, from the 7th.

and she was compelled, however reluctant, to confess, that the destruction intended was national; the withdrawing of God's peculiar favour from the people, the loss of their high privileges, the ruin of their magnificent temple and city, their captivities and final dispersion, and the trampling of them down by the Gentiles.

This being at length conceded, I asked thirdly, whether it were not a difficult matter to convince the Jews of the possibility of their fall from that proud condition which they had hitherto enjoyed, of being the elect people of God, the keepers of his sacred oracles, and the ancestors, according to the flesh, of the great Prince that was then to come? She granted it. "How very apt, then, how very striking and forcible," I said, "was this similitude of the potter and the clay! The potter fashions upon the wheels a vessel of clay; in a moment he mars it; he dashes it to pieces in his anger, as the Psalmist says, or he obliterates the form which he has made, because it does not correspond to the fair idea in his own mind; but in a second moment another vessel rises under his moulding hand, as his judgment or will directs him. Such then was the kingdom of Israel in the hand of God. As it had been planted, and built up, by his sovereign will alone; so might it be pulled down, plucked up from the foundations, and destroyed by the same irresistible will. But observe, it is the first act only, the election of the Jews from the mass of nations for a particular object, it is *that* only which is irrespective, if it be indeed irrespective; (you know the meaning of the word) their rejection was not to be so. In that God would no longer act like the potter simply according to his supreme will, but by the law of his moral attributes. If they returned from their evil ways, they might still preserve his love. Now mark the sequel. The Jews increased in sin, and might well be called vessels fitted for destruction; but God was long-suffering towards them, and forebore to dash their state to pieces, until his grand eternal purpose of admitting the Gentiles into the Gospel-covenant was ripe for accomplishment. Then, when they had themselves rejected that Gospel, and crowned their other wicked deeds by the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory, God at length cast them off, and rooted them out of their once favoured and glorious land, and scattered them far and wide amongst the nations of the earth, a spectacle and a proverb of reproach to this day. What have the Jews to object? God chose them at the first irrespectively, if you please, of his own free grace, to hold a distinguished rank in the world; why may he not, as irrespectively, if he will, depose them from that rank, when the great purpose of his moral government of mankind is answered? Other nations have been raised up to glory, and pulled down again; and we can give no account of it, but God's supreme will. Why not the Jews in the same manner? But God did not deal so with *them*. We know the contrary from what God himself said, and from what our bless-

ed Lord said when he wept over Jerusalem. In God's conduct to the Jews, in short, he submits every thing to the bar of our reason; and we acknowledge the hand of justice alone in their punishment. This is the whole argument both of the Prophet and of the Apostle. In what part of it do you see the least shadow of the doctrine of the predestination of individuals to life, or death? Be candid, my good Mrs. Milton, be candid; and yield to the force of truth."

She bit her lips with vexation; but having nothing to answer directly to the point, in order to gain time, as it might seem, she said, "Yes, Sir, but this about the clay and the potter is not all; I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; how would you try to explain *that* away, Sir? What can *that* mean, but God's supreme will, without any regard to men themselves, whether they be better or worse than others, as you might think them?"

"Be patient, my good Mrs. Milton," I said, "and I will explain every thing to you in due time; but I cannot explain every thing at once. And before I explain this text it will not be amiss to caution you against one great danger into which persons of your description are too apt to fall. St. Peter found it necessary to give the same caution even in those early times. For it seems, that as soon as St. Paul's Epistles were published, people began immediately to wrest them to their own destruction. And, no doubt, one way of doing so was this; they took a single sentence by itself, like that text of yours, and explained it by itself; not considering what went before, or after; nor whether the sense, which they thus put upon it, agreed with the rest of Scripture, or not. So in your case; if the sense of this text be what you suppose, all the rest of the Bible would be overturned; for all the rest of the Bible goes upon this idea, that God is a rewarder of those, who diligently seek him; and that he is no respecter of persons; but that he accepts all men, who fear him, and work righteousness, whoever they may be, or of whatever nation. And this agrees so much better with our notions of infinite justice, wisdom, and goodness, that we might naturally be led at once to think that any sentence appearing to contradict it, must be capable of being satisfactorily explained, when compared with the context and other parts of the Bible.

"However, for a moment I will take your text quite by itself, as you have done; and yet, even then, the very last idea that would have come into my mind would have been yours; that God determined from the beginning, whom he would save, and whom he would damn, everlastingly, without caring what they were. I should have reasoned in this manner; this text applies to individuals, or to nations; if to individuals; then it may mean that God sends them irrespectively health or sickness, riches or poverty, or what not? He makes them kings or beggars, masters or servants, philosophers or ideots. I say, irrespectively; but I myself believe

no such thing. I believe that God deals out even these temporal worldly advantages and disadvantages upon the wisest and best reasons. But very often we can give no account of it; and in general God himself will not vouchsafe to give us any account of it; and so we come to say, that they are dealt out irrespectively. But let it be so. The idea, that God makes us thus individually what he pleases in this world, like the potter creating out of the same lump of clay whatever forms he will, according to his own fancy or caprice, is not so terrible to us, and does not so monstrously shock our native feelings of right and wrong, as the other idea, that he plays and sports, as it were, with the precious immortal souls of his creatures, and irrespectively ordains them by his eternal fiat to endless happiness or misery. Besides, those temporal worldly circumstances are of the less consequence, because they have nothing to do directly with our eternal condition. The effect of them is as men may use them, and they are good and evil only in this view. The beggar may be saved as well as the king; and perhaps the better for being a beggar; nay, certainly so, if I conceive aright of the dispensations of Providence. And I feel confident that my conceptions of God are honourable to him, whilst yours are apparently the very reverse.

"Pray tell me; if you should see a man endued with uncommon strength, employing that strength, in order to show it, in knocking down indiscriminately all whom he might chance to meet in the streets, or in succouring the aged and the weak, who were heavily laden, and carrying their burdens for them; which would you call the more glorious application of his strength?"

"The latter," she said. "And why?" I inquired again. "Is it not because the latter is directed by wisdom and mercy; and the former is a mere random and mischievous exertion of strength? She could not deny it. "Well then," I said, "you have no scruple in supposing, that God acts thus indiscriminately by his Providence, even with respect to the everlasting state of men's souls, and in maintaining that it would be an impeachment of his power and glory to presume to say that he acted otherwise; whereas you would immediately cry shame against any human being who should dare to act in the same manner even in trifling things. No, no, Mrs. Milton; God's true glory arises from the wise, and the just, and the merciful use of his infinite power. Such power in the hands of a man is a horrible thought. Why? because you cannot depend upon the rectitude of a man. But in the hands of God it creates no alarm; because his other perfections are infinite."

Here she interrupted me, and said, "Yes, Sir; but his ways are not as our ways; nor his thoughts as our thoughts." "That sentiment," I replied, "is very true, and very pious, when rightly understood; but it has nothing whatever to do with the present question between us. Many of his ways, no doubt, will always be un-

searchable, and past finding out by such limited beings as we are; and many, although known, we shall never understand with our present faculties. Creation and Redemption, for instance, are unfathomable mysteries, and so unlike to any ways of ours that they appear almost contradictory to our reason. And the things which seem great and little to our thoughts are not so to an infinite Being. Great and little, and space and time, are all swallowed up in God's immensity. But where his moral attributes are concerned, we are not altogether at a loss how to judge correctly; they are the same in kind both in *him* and in *us*; but he exercises them in their full perfection and lustre; whilst in *us* they are corrupted and dimmed by human frailties and affections. You must remember the 18th chapter of the prophet Ezekiel; it is well worthy of your study, and sufficient of itself to extinguish all idea of God's acting irrespectively, at least in the punishment of men even in this world; but what I mention it for now is this; that God actually invites us there to judge of his proceedings in the moral government of mankind. 'O Israel,' he exclaims by the Prophet's mouth, 'are not *my* ways equal? are not *your* ways unequal?' But if justice and other moral attributes were a different thing in God from what they are in *us*, except in degree, it would be vain and idle to invite us to consider the divine dealings with us; for we should have no foundation to stand upon. Let us go back then to the point at which you stopped me.

"We were speaking of God's having mercy on whom he will; and considering the text by itself, we applied it to individuals; now we will apply it to nations; but as applied to nations, which cannot be saved or damned collectively, it can only regard their temporal condition; whether they shall be ruling nations or subject-nations; learned or ignorant; enjoying great advantages, or disadvantages, as we might call them. And in point of fact we can give very little account of the selection of some nations to be more distinguished than others in power, or glory, or wealth, or learning, or liberty, or moral and religious knowledge; but suppose the selection were quite irrespectively, what has this to do with the salvation of individuals? Nothing whatever; no, not even in the singular case of the Jews. God vouchsafed to them great religious and moral advantages above all the nations of the old world; and certainly, for no merit of their own, but with other important views, as I have already explained. Individuals however under this national covenant might have made extraordinary advances in piety and virtue, and their faith might have been reckoned to them for righteousness; but their salvation, if they were so blessed, was no necessary effect of the covenant under which they lived; it was owing to the retrospective merits of Christ. Neither were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob necessarily saved, because they were chosen to be the Fathers of the Jewish people; nor were Ishmael and Esau necessarily condemned, be-

cause Isaac and Jacob were preferred before them. Abraham entreated God for Ishmael, and Esau besought his father Isaac with tears, to obtain the pre-eminent patriarchal distinction; but, in these temporal matters, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; every thing must be referred to God's secret purposes in the government of his rational creatures; and God does not make men kings, or glorious, or rich, because they themselves desire it. Nor is there any just ground of complaint for those who are passed by; because, with respect to their eternal condition, the rule of judgment will be according to that which they have, not according to that which they have not.

"Now then, Mrs. Milton, I have bestowed great pains to show you, how we ought to reason upon that text, if it were taken by itself, as you have taken it; and you perceive, that it is quite absurd to jump from it to such a conclusion as you have done. But, after all, the true way of getting to the sense of any passage is, to compare it with the context, and the whole of Scripture; and I have said already, that *your* interpretation is at variance with all the rest of the Bible; and, if we look to the place in the book of Exodus, where the text was originally spoken by God himself to Moses, we see immediately, that it was spoken of nations, and more particularly and immediately of the Jewish nation; so that it can have nothing whatever to do with salvation, or damnation, in the next world. Look here; I will read it to you; it is in the 33d chapter; and a wonderfully fine chapter it is. Now look to the 9th of the Romans; and you will perceive at once, how St. Paul applies this text to the Jews of his own age; reminding them too, that it was what God said to Moses. In short, it evidently means, that God, if he chose to do so, might admit the Gentiles into covenant with him, in the place of the rejected Jews, by an act of his supreme will, in the same manner as he had before been gracious and merciful to the Jews, at a time when they did not deserve such especial favour; and who should say him nay? The rebellious Jews themselves were the last people in the world to dare to murmur at such a dispensation."

In going through the context and explaining it according to the view just taken of it, I came to the 18th verse, where it is said, that God hardeneth whom he will. She had forgotten this text before, and now she caught at it with a sort of voracious appetite, and cried out; "Aye, aye, Sir; what is *this*, I pray you? Can any thing be plainer or more positive than *this*? This will defy all perversion or cavilling."

Her triumph was short; but I was sorry to observe, by the use of these expressions, that, in spite of my explanations, she still obstinately clung to her own opinions, as if her salvation depended upon them; and that probably she bore malice against me in her heart for controverting them. However, I thought it best to leave

nothing unanswered; and time and reflection, I hoped, might have a good effect hereafter. But first I said, "God forbid, Mrs. Milton, that I should cavil upon such an awful subject as life and death eternal, or endeavour to pervert the texts of Scripture from their true meaning! And I am sure that you have no sufficient reason for making such a charge against me. I have proceeded with you in the fairest and most candid manner; I have listened to all your objections; and I have replied to every thing, as long as you had any thing to say. You have now advanced a new text; I will reply to *that*, as I did to the others; namely, by explaining it; which will show that it is not connected with what you imagine.

"First then, taking the expression, 'whom he will, he hardeneth,' in its simple sense; why should we go back to the beginning of things, and say, upon the authority of this text, that God predetermined from all eternity to harden whom he will? Is it not quite sufficient to say, that he determines to harden whomever he does harden on each particular occasion when the occasion may call for it? What need of an eternal decree to account for God's conduct, or to explain this text? However, in the second place, it is spoken, you see, of Pharaoh, and alludes to the astonishing obstinacy and obduracy of his resistance to God's declared will; and we might well suppose, that the Spirit of God would strive no longer against so great a degree of disobedience and infidelity. This Spirit then being withdrawn, and the wicked King abandoned to his own blind and furious passions, his heart is of course completely hardened against every motive of piety or virtue, to which it was naturally a stranger. We know from Scripture, that there is a certain point beyond which God will interfere no more. Pharaoh passed this point, and then God left him to himself, to do what he liked. So that, you perceive, there needed no positive act on the part of God to harden him, but only to strive no longer against his wickedness; and this, I presume, is God's usual method in the government of individuals. But suppose, if you please, that, in the case of Pharaoh, he went beyond this; that not only his Spirit ceased to strive with that wicked monarch, but also that such motives were forcibly suggested to him by the cessation of the plagues, although primarily an act of Divine goodness, as drove him headlong down the precipice, on which he stood; what then? This I call a judicial proceeding on the part of God; he has passed sentence against the man on account of his wickedness, and now he inflicts punishment immediately in the present world. But in explaining the matter in this way we must be careful not to make God the direct author of sin; which would be a monstrous impiety and blasphemy. What I myself think therefore is this; that God providentially so disposed the course of events, in the separation of the Jews from the rest of mankind, that they were nursed up in Egypt, till they became a numerous people, under mild and gentle kings, who pro-

tected and cherished them; and were now to be brought out, for their own instruction and God's glory, with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, under a king, who, by his cruelties, should make them eager to depart, and, by his ferocious unsteady character, should give occasion for the display of all those miraculous deeds which bore witness to the presence of the great Jehovah himself amongst them. This interpretation brings honour to God, and is therefore likely to be the true one; for under this view we contemplate him as a Being who foreknows all things, and who by his Providence extracts a mighty good out of the evil passions of men. But whether this be all; or whether he go farther, and withdraw his Spirit from the wicked whom he has sufficiently tried; or farther still, and actually punish them with a judicial blindness, in consequence of which they plunge deeper into sin; under any of these views of his government we need no eternal decrees to harden men before they are born; and still less can we admit such decrees to settle the doom of men for ever in hell. God is present every where at every moment, and he acts perpetually by his Providence. He is not like the maker of that clock of yours, who formed a machine, with various parts, arranged in a certain order, to go on moving, and performing its office, as long as it could; and who, when he had finished it, and sent it out of his hands, troubled himself no more about it; God made the world, and his eye is still ever upon it, watching the dispositions and works of his creatures; and his ears are still ever open to hear the prayers and praises which they send up to him; and his hand is still ever employed in showering down benefits or inflicting punishments; which benefits and which punishments, are both alike mercies, to bring men to heaven. For why will ye die? he saith. I have no pleasure in the death of *him* that dieth; saith the Lord God. This, I think, is a beautiful and noble picture of the Deity; but your system of predestination, Mrs. Milton, and eternal decrees (O horrible thought!) makes God the direct author of all the sin and wickedness with which the world is overflowed, and is therefore to be rejected for ever with a just and deep abomination."

Thus I concluded the explanation of her text. How she was affected I could only conjecture by the uneasiness of her gestures, and the displeasure of her looks. She bore with me however to the end; and then, having stored up in her mind that I had attributed foreknowledge to God, she asked me, whether I could account for such a perfection in a better way, than by the fact of God having ordained every thing, and therefore foreknowing it; or, at all events, if God certainly foreknew every thing, whether the actions of men did not in consequence become certain also, and therefore inevitable; so that all free will and choice on the part of man was thereby lost. This was the substance and meaning of what she said, which she expressed in her own way, it mat-

ters not how; and in my answer I repeated to her the same explanations which I had used to Mrs. Holmes; but I also endeavoured besides to clear up the difficulty in the following manner.

Looking through the window I saw one of the old women at the pump, which stood in the centre of the court-yard; and I asked Mrs. Milton who it was. "It is Mrs. Callender," she answered. "And what is she doing?" I asked again. "She is filling her tea-kettle," she said. "Are you quite sure of it?" I asked once more. "Yes, Sir," she replied with surprise at my question; "I cannot possibly be mistaken; I am perfectly certain about it." "Very well then," I said; "here is a circumstance which you know certainly and infallibly; does your certain and infallible knowledge of the thing make Mrs. Callender do it?"

"No, to be sure," she answered; "it cannot." "And yet," I said, "if she did not certainly do the thing, you could not certainly know it." "Very true," she replied. "Do you understand then," I inquired, "that it is *her* doing the thing which makes you infallibly know it, and not your infallible knowledge of it which forces her to do it?" "I do understand it," she said; "and I think I understand also what you are driving at. But knowledge and foreknowledge, Sir, are very different things."

"Be patient, Mrs. Milton," I said, interrupting her; "be patient, and we shall come to that in a moment. Look again, and tell me what Mrs. Callender is doing now." "She is going back to her house, Sir," she answered, "with her tea-kettle full of water." "And do you know," I inquired, "what she will do when she comes there?" "Yes," she replied; "*that* I do very well. It will be her tea-time in half an hour; and so she will put her kettle on the fire immediately." "Here then, Mrs. Milton," I said, "is a circumstance which you foreknow; but you will hardly tell me, I should think, that good Mrs. Callender does not put the kettle on the fire of her own free will, and quite uninfluenced by *you*."

She was staggered at first; but soon collecting herself she answered; "I was too hasty, Sir, in saying that I knew very well what Mrs. Callender was going to do. It is likely indeed that she will put her kettle on the fire; but she may set it down, and do something else first; or, for what I know, Sir, she may drop down dead, as soon as she crosses the threshold."

"She may, undoubtedly," I said; "and this glorious sun, which now shines in so brightly through your window, may rise no more; but you have the greatest human certainty, that the sun will rise to-morrow, without your foreknowledge, however certain, causing it to do so; thus in the case of Mrs. Callender your foreknowing to the greatest certainty, humanly speaking, that she will put her kettle down on the floor, or on the fire, will have no effect whatever in causing her to do the one or the other. She does not think about

your foreknowing what she is going to do; she thinks only of what is most convenient to herself, and exercises her judgment and free will, whether she shall put the kettle on the fire at once, or wait a few minutes; so that your foreknowledge, if it were absolutely certain, would make no difference with respect to Mrs. Callender; the difference is only to yourself; she would act precisely the same, whether you were humanly or absolutely certain. If you were like God, you would be absolutely certain, and would have the most perfect foreknowledge; but Mrs. Callender would do exactly what she intended to do, uninfluenced by your foreknowledge, which is entirely confined to yourself, and has nothing to do with *her*. This then is the state of the case with respect to the divine foreknowledge; but when we come to talk of God's Providence, then the difficulty begins; for Providence supposes acting also as well as knowing; and you might think that he could not act upon us without destroying our free will. However, we are assured from Scripture that the Providence of God and the free will of man are perfectly consistent, whether we can explain the consistency or not. But in truth we *can* explain it in numberless instances, although not in all. Consider: For what purposes does the Providence of God interfere with the actions of men at all? It seems worthy of his nature that he should interfere for the restraint of the wicked. We will take that case only; but it will be the pattern of many more, when you reflect upon the subject at your leisure. Has he not then all the mighty elements of nature at his command, which he can use, as he pleases, to thwart the sinful designs of men, without putting any force upon their own free will?

“Suppose some Pirates sailing prosperously before the wind with the fixed intention of plundering a defenceless city. On a sudden, when their prey is almost within their grasp, a furious storm arises, and blows them off many a league away from their object. The deed, which they meditated, is unperformed; but their will was free, and remains so under all the circumstances. Their will, by which God will try them, was to perform the deed; but God, without changing their will, made the deed impossible. What is to prevent him therefore from reckoning with them in perfect justice? If he had influenced their will, they would not have been accountable to him.

“But to take a real fact. When that wicked ambitious warrior, of whom you have heard so much; Buonaparte I mean; thought to have subdued under his yoke all the cold kingdoms of the North; God opened his great treasure-houses of frost and snow; and who could abide it? The vast attempt of the man was cut short; but his will was untouched; and he therefore continued to be responsible for the whole action to the Divine Judge. This, and what I said before about Pharaoh and the Jews, will be a sort of clew to guide you through many difficulties; and as to the rest, we leave it to

God himself. Without doubt we are here in a state of trial, and are accountable beings; which could not be the case, if we were not free to act. Our actions would be the actions of *him*, who ordained them; our sins would be *his*; and if this be not blasphemy, when spoken of God, I know not what is blasphemy."

Mrs. Milton was as averse from yielding as ever; but she was reduced to silence against her inclination, and seemed to have nothing more to say. So I turned over in my thoughts what she had thrown out incidentally, and to which no answer had yet been given; and I now brought it forward, fearing lest it might occur to her again, when I was gone, and confirm her in her opinions, by appearing unanswerable. After a short pause, therefore I continued thus.

"I have not forgotten, Mrs. Milton, that, amongst other things, you called the strange Lady, the elect Lady." "I did, Sir," she answered; "I thought her so *then*, and, if you will excuse me, I think her so still." "Oh!" I said, "I will excuse you readily; I wish you to state your opinions openly, and to produce all your arguments; I will answer them, and you may afterwards reflect upon the whole subject by yourself, and pray to God to enlighten your understanding, that you may know the truth.

"Do you use the word 'elect' in the same sense that St. John uses it?" "I do," she replied. "Very well then," I said; "look here in your Bible; here is a case exactly to the point. He begins his second Epistle in these words, 'the elder unto the elect Lady.' Nothing can possibly be more apt for our purpose. You will suppose that this Lady was predestinated to eternal life, and consequently that she cannot fail of it. Let us examine the Epistle, and see whether it be written on this idea. No, it is not. It runs upon the idea that she might possibly fall from the faith. Indeed the 8th verse shows that she was in danger of falling; for, you perceive, it says, 'look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought.' So then the Apostle's labour in her conversion might be all in vain."

Mrs. Milton was not a little disturbed at this interpretation; and she inquired, rather angrily, what the word could mean, if not chosen to salvation from all eternity. "It means no more," I said, "than that this Lady had been called to the knowledge of the Gospel, and admitted into the Christian covenant." "At that rate then," she exclaimed, "all Christians might have had the same title. Is not *that* so, I ask you, Sir?" "Undoubtedly," I replied; "all Christians, and more especially the early Christians, might have had this same title; and, what is more, they all had it. See here St. Peter; he writes to the strangers scattered throughout divers countries, and he calls them all 'elect.' Again, in the salutation at the end he says, 'the Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you.' Now, you may remember, I mentioned before St.

Peter's famous text, that men must be diligent to make their calling and election sure. It is plain, therefore, that St. Peter had a very different idea of the word 'elect,' from that which you have; and it does not stand to reason that all those persons to whom St. Peter wrote should actually be saved. For then it would not be true to say, 'many are called, but few are chosen;' we ought to say, all who are called are chosen also; and the Christian net, cast into the sea, does not gather up the good and the bad together, as Christ tells us, but the good alone. The use of the word is the same with St. Paul; he addresses all his converts as the 'elect;' but it appears that many of them were guilty of crimes which might lead to their damnation. Why, even Judas Iscariot himself was one of the elect; but you will allow, I presume, that he fell from the privileges of his election. No, no, it means nothing of what you suppose, but only the great and enviable distinction of being first called to Christianity; that is its proper sense; and it is a title, therefore, which in that sense applies no longer to any Christian person in a Christian country, although it may be so used. When a single family like that of the elect Lady, seated perhaps in the midst of an idolatrous city or nation, was converted to Christianity, and became a part of the visible church; or, when the same thing happened to many families before the conversion of the whole city or nation to which those families belonged, the title of elect was applied to them with a peculiar propriety, and was an honourable distinction; but when the conversion became general, distinctions were done away, and the title itself, I believe, fell gradually almost into disuse.

"Look here at the 11th chapter of St. Paul to the Romans. It is remarkable that in this one and the same chapter, he calls both the Jews who rejected and the Jews who received the Gospel by the self-same title of the election. Would it not be ridiculous then to assert that election had any thing to do with an eternal decree appointing men irrespectively to salvation? The Jewish people are called the election, because they were distinguished from the rest of mankind by being admitted to the privileges of the Mosaic covenant; and the Christian Jews are called the election, because they were distinguished from the rest of the Jews by being admitted to the Gospel-covenant; and again to distinguish one election from the other, these latter are called the election of grace.

"It must be observed, however, that as God foreknows all things, he of course foreknows who will be the elect; and so St. Peter calls *all* the Christians to whom he writes, 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God;' not elect to actual salvation, but to the capacity of it; for all were capable of it, but it was not credible that all would obtain it. Then again, foreknowledge must mean the foreknowledge of something peculiar to these people; either that there was some aptitude in them themselves for the reception of the Gospel; or that, for the sake of spreading the Gospel with the greater

facility and rapidity, it would be expedient to begin with them; or both these circumstances might have existed together; and then we might conceive God disposing things by his providence in such a manner that the Gospel should be preached to them in due season. At all events, you see, we get rid of all notion of God's dealings being irrespective and arbitrary, not only with regard to everlasting salvation, but also with regard to the first calling of any persons to the knowledge of the Gospel.

“If I had time, Mrs. Milton, I would gladly go through all the passages, in which any mention is made of electing or choosing; and perhaps we may find time hereafter, if God so will. But there is one very remarkable text which I will not now omit. St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says in the 2d chapter of his 2d Epistle, at the 13th verse, that ‘God had chosen them from the beginning to salvation.’ Now I have no doubt, that many people, taking this text by itself, would immediately run away with the idea, that here was the very essence of Calvinism. But let them consider, salvation cannot here mean more than the capacity; the being admitted into a covenant of which salvation was the end. It cannot mean more, because it is spoken of all the Thessalonian Christians; and because, in the very same Epistle, St. Paul prays, ‘that God would count them worthy of this election, and that they might glorify the name of Jesus Christ.’ See therefore, my good Mrs. Milton, how necessary it is always to look to the context, and to the whole tenour of an Epistle, before you venture to explain a detached passage. St. Paul fears lest the tempter might tempt the Thessalonians, and so make vain the Apostle’s labour; he could not therefore consider them immutably appointed to salvation.”

Here Mrs. Milton began to be very uneasy, and wished, I believe, to get rid of me; so, being also very much fatigued myself, I hastened to draw to a conclusion of the whole discussion, which I did in this manner. “There remains now,” I said, “to the best of my recollection, but one point more to which I have not yet spoken; I shall be extremely brief upon it indeed. In assuming that particular persons were predestinated to eternal life, you assumed at the same time, that it was only for such that Christ died. No doctrine can be so totally contrary to the Gospel as this of particular redemption, and it shall not pass without my decided reprobation. I could overwhelm you with texts against it; but two or three very striking ones will be sufficient for any ingenuous mind. St. John says, ‘Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;’ and St. Paul says ‘he died for all;’ ‘he gave himself a ransom for all;’ ‘he tasted death for every man.’”

“What!” cried Mrs. Milton; “did he die, then, for the reprobates too?” “Yes,” I answered, “for the reprobates too; but not for the reprobates in the sense that you understand the word; for

there are no such persons; but for those, who will not be able to abide that severe scrutiny into their faith and works, which the great Judge will institute at the last day. Those are the true reprobates, and Christ died for *them*, as well as for the best Christians; but *they* wilfully put away his salvation from them, and trample under foot *him* who bought them with his blood, and bring upon themselves destruction. Thus spoke St. Peter, and St. Paul's language was the same; and therefore the redemption wrought by Christ's death is without limit, and perfectly universal; and the great glory and sweet comfort of this doctrine is, that it utterly overthrows all the tenets of Calvinism, and encourages the poor dejected sinner to cast away despair, and to lift up his head in humble hope of being able to touch the hem of his Saviour's garment, and thereby to become clean. If he pray, he is assured that he has an Intercessor at God's right hand, who will help his prayers; who died for him, in short, and will therefore plead his merits in his behalf. But with what spirit will *you* pray, Mrs. Milton? If your lot be fixed by an irreversible decree, what is the use of prayer? Prayer cannot alter it.

“But I have now done. Fare you well, Mrs. Milton; and walk I beseech you henceforth worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called; with all lowliness and meekness; with long-suffering and forbearance; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” So I left her.

DEATH-BED SCENES,

AND

PASTORAL CONVERSATIONS.

BY THE LATE

JOHN WARTON, D. D.

EDITED BY HIS SONS.

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PREFACE BY THE EDITORS.

THE First Volume of this Work having been much commended, not only by the Clergy, for whose use it was principally designed, but also by Laymen of various talents and professions ; we gladly fulfil our promise of publishing a Second ; which, we trust, will not be found inferior to the other in interest, or instruction.



DEATH-BED SCENES.

CHAPTER I.

MARTHA BILSON—IMPATIENCE.

§ 1. MARTHA BILSON, MRS. CLAYTON, &c.

IN my walks through the parish I sometimes visited and chatted with an old woman of the name of Clayton, who kept a school for very small children. My first acquaintance with her was occasioned by attending upon her sick husband, who died under my ministrations. They were an aged couple, of equal primitive simplicity, and their hearts knew no guile. In the times of health they had been regular at church ; but of late they had been quite crippled with rheumatism, and incapable of stirring abroad from their cottage ; yet they never applied to the parish for relief, when disabled from earning any thing by age and infirmity. They had seen their children, and their children's children, growing up under their eye, and treading in their own steps ; and one son in particular, who lived close at hand, assisted his parents, to the utmost of his power, although but a carter, with a large family.

The old patriarch having been gathered to his forefathers, the widow opened her school, with the view of deriving a maintenance from it. But it was just at the period when the system of Dr. Bell began to be known and introduced, here and there, before the institution of the National Society for the Education of the Poor. Being myself acquainted with Dr. Bell, I had the opportunity of becoming acquainted also with his system, and I had established it at once in my own parish. The zeal and the munificence of the rich outstripped my wishes, and a large building soon sprung up to receive the youthful population. The schools of the poor old dames, and of the masters too, were many of them deserted in consequence, and Mrs. Clayton suffered with the rest of the same profession.

However, when myself and Mrs. Warton entered her cottage one day in the course of our rambles, we found her surrounded

with a goodly circle of scholars. Some of them were too young to go to the National School, and others were of a race above it, being the children of small farmers and tradesmen. Having opened the door ourselves, and coasted along the side of a large skreen, which defended the dame and her infant fry from the cold blasts of wind, we came at length into the midst of the busy scene ; and all the gabbling was hushed at once by this mighty potentate, upon the simple application of her fore-finger to her mouth. She was seated in an arm-chair by the fire-side ; her stature was short, and her whole person small ; her face was wrinkled ; her grey hairs peeped from under a neat white cap ; her nose was bestridden by a pair of spectacles ; her right hand wielded a long slender wand, with which she could reach at will the head of any luckless wight, even the most remote of the circle. On the mantel-piece lay a birchen rod, the terrific emblem of her authority, and the instrument of her severer punishments ; the children tingled, no doubt, whilst they eyed it askance.

Upon seeing us she began to be in a bustle. First, she took off her spectacles, and laid them on a Bible which was open before her ; then she attempted to get hold of her crutches, that she might rise to welcome us ; but Mrs. Warton was soon by her side, and, having resettled her in her position, she restored her without much difficulty to her wonted calm. We were then desired to sit down ; and we did so, as soon as we had hunted out two chairs, and found two convenient places for them, which was by no means an easy matter. When all was arranged, expectation held us mute ; but the good old lady was mute also, and seemed to wait to be informed what might be our pleasure.

I said, therefore, after some pause, " We have never been here before, Mrs. Clayton, when your little scholars happened to be with you ; if you have no objection, I should like to hear what progress they have made in their learning." " You shall hear directly, Sir," she answered, replacing her spectacles upon her nose ; and then she added, with a look of self-satisfaction and pride, " and I am sure, Sir, you will be pleased with them." " I dare say that I shall," I rejoined ; " but do *you* examine them yourself, good Mrs. Clayton ; for they have not been used to *me*, and may not understand me so well."

She embraced my proposal readily, with somewhat of the air of one who hoped to rival me in the art of examination ; for she had heard how much was done in that way in our National School, and what numbers of persons had been to see it, as one of the earliest and therefore the more surprising ; but she was in no fear of comparisons. Her children, therefore, being now in order, and the inattentive warned by a gentle tap of the cane to listen to her questions, with a countenance betokening authority, gravity, and im-

portance, she began and continued as follows, the children answering in succession, and without any hesitation or delay:—

“Who was the first man? Who was the oldest man? Who was the meekest man upon earth? Who was the patientest man? Who was the man after God’s own heart? Who was the wisest man? Who was the strongest man? Who was the hard-heartedest man?” And thus she went on till she had finished a much longer catalogue than that which I have here given; and no fault or mistake having occurred, she looked round towards me and Mrs. Warton, with looks which expected and demanded the tribute of a well-earned applause.

We bore it very well, and sat with a due composure, till she came to her question of the hard-heartedest man, when I began to tremble for the event; for I saw Mrs. Warton restraining herself from laughter with the very utmost difficulty, and my own risible muscles underwent a severe trial. Our curiosity, however, to hear the answer had some effect in keeping us quiet; and it turned out to be Pharaoh, whose name one of the little urchins pronounced, with as much contentment and certainty, as if she had been perfectly acquainted with his whole history.

“Well, my good old friend,” I said, “you must have taken a great deal of pains to teach these young children to answer so many questions, and so correctly too.” “Yes, Sir,” she answered, “I have, indeed; and I am glad that it meets with your approbation. But what is a school-mistress, Sir, that does not take pains, and is ignorant of her Bible? But you would like, Sir, I dare say, to hear them examined again; I have more questions as good as the last.” “Very probably,” I answered, “but the clock has struck twelve, and the children should now be dismissed to their dinners.” “Oh! never mind, Sir,” she said, “they have but a little way to go, and you may never have so good an opportunity again. Their dinners will not spoil.”

Thus it seemed that we were fairly set in for another specimen of Mrs. Clayton’s method of examination; but it happened otherwise; for, on the sudden, at this very instant, a loud cry burst upon us from the chamber above, and we soon distinguished the voice of a woman, exclaiming with mingled grief and anger, “Ah, the villain! ah, the wicked wretch! he will be the cause of my death! he has ruined and undone me!” We started up in amazement, and Mrs. Clayton beckoned away her scholars in a trice; and then she said, “It is my lodger, Sir,—Martha Bilson; she has just miscarried, Madam, and her husband has run away from her, and when her dreadful pain comes on she cannot bear it, Madam, and she screams out in this manner.”

Upon this Mrs. Warton hastened up stairs, leaving me below with the old lady until we knew more of the existing circumstan-

ces. The exclamations were not repeated during the interval of Mrs. Warton's absence, so that I was not diverted from listening to the account which Mrs. Clayton gave me of her unfortunate and unhappy lodger. Martha, she told me, was a young woman who had lived in good services, and was very decent in her appearance and behaviour, and an honester or more modest creature there could not be; but she was too hasty in marrying. A young man, of whom she knew nothing, an entire stranger to every body, came into the parish, and made love to her, and before he had been here six weeks, the banns were published. "Ah! Sir," she said, "he was a very canting, hypocritical, base fellow, and had deceived and married two or three young women in the same manner already. Poor Martha had saved a little money, Sir; and when he had got it and spent it all, he told her without blushing, that he was married elsewhere, and away he went, leaving her with child, and in a worse situation besides than I can tell you, Sir; for he was a very wicked man, aye, very wicked, Sir, indeed. However, he is gone, Sir, and the grief of it, and her other bitter misfortunes, and the remembrance of what she was, have broken her down to the ground, and brought on an untimely birth; and I fear, Sir, that if her disorders do not kill her, her sorrow will."

"But has she no comforts in her religion?" I inquired. "Does she find nothing in her Bible to bear her up? Her calamities are very heavy, to be sure; but they are only for a moment, you know, my good Mrs. Clayton, and then comes the better world above to last for ever." "Ay, Sir, indeed," she answered, "and so my poor old man and *me* used to comfort one another; and I do not know what would have become of us (for we had many troubles of late) if we had not read our Bibles. But poor Martha, Sir," she said, lowering her tone from the fear of being overheard, "poor Martha never reads her Bible, although she has got a very nice one; and so she wants meekness, Sir, and patience, and resignation."

At this moment Mrs. Warton called me, and I soon joined her in the sick chamber, whispering at the same time as I passed her, that I knew enough for my present direction. The poor woman was lying on her bed, as if languid and faint after a great exertion, and she had evidently been tearing her hair in the last paroxysm; it was once black, but sorrow had turned it grey. An old person, whom I discovered afterwards to be her mother, was on the farther side of the bed, holding one of her daughter's hands, and her countenance was still marked with terror and dismay. The appearance of Mrs. Warton and myself standing by them relieved them both; and in a short time poor Martha seemed to be so far recovered as to be able to talk with us; so I began thus:—

"We are very sorry for you, Martha; for you are very ill, I

fear, and very much disturbed in your mind." "I am, indeed, Sir," she replied; "I have been used barbarously, and I have done nothing to deserve it, and my troubles are greater than what I can bear." "Yes," I said, "I know that you have been used very barbarously; and I know also that you have always borne a good character. Your masters and mistresses, I am told, all speak well of you, in whatever service you have been; and even your husband, I should think, could not speak ill of you, if he spoke the truth. But this will not save you from troubles, Martha; troubles will come, be you what you may; they come upon the best sometimes, as well as upon the worst; and even the very best are not too good to be improved by them. Some virtues, indeed, you could never show at all without troubles, and they are virtues which God values in a high degree, and will, therefore, highly reward hereafter. If you had been always well, Martha, and always prosperous, what opportunity would you have had for patience, and fortitude, and submission, and resignation to God's will? In all circumstances, therefore, we must thank *him* for enabling us to learn more and more how to please him, and to become better qualified for heaven. When you were in health and prosperity, you applied yourself to honest industry, instead of being idle and a burden upon your parents, and what money you earned you never spent foolishly, in buying tawdry bonnets and ribbons, or wickedly, in buying drink: so far you did right; and God, I am sure, was so far pleased with the manner in which you bore the trial of health and prosperity: and now he is trying you with adversity—with sickness, I mean, and poverty, that he may see how you will bear *them*. Or, more probably, he knows already that they will be good for you, and, therefore, he has sent them; so that it will be both your interest and your duty, my poor friend, to make all the use that may be made of your misfortunes, and more especially the use which God intends."

She was by no means disposed to admit this doctrine, which was, indeed, quite new to her; and again and again, as I went on, she was upon the point of interrupting me, had I not repressed her by the movement of my hand, and the earnestness of my look. When I stopped, she exclaimed in an instant, as if she had utterly forgotten all that I had said, whilst her thoughts dwelt painfully upon the impressions deepest in her mind, "Ah! Sir, in spite of what you tell me, is not God very cruel, to suffer me to be afflicted in this manner, when I have never done any thing to offend him?" She would have run on, no doubt, in the same strain of impiety and presumption, but observing how shocked I was, and that my countenance became stern and severe, she checked herself, and said no more. I replied immediately, "Beware, Martha, beware, how you call God cruel, or think yourself free

from offence; respectable as your conduct has always been, and much as you have been praised, with justice too, yet I do not doubt but that your offences against God are more in number than the very hairs of your head." She looked at me with astonishment when I charged her thus, and with great difficulty restrained her tongue; but I proceeded, "And as for God himself, he is always merciful; and most merciful, perhaps when *you* think him most cruel." "I cannot understand this at all, Sir," she said impatiently, when I had done, "and I see no reason why he should bring these evils upon me; nor does my conscience accuse me of any harm that I have ever done to any body or to *him*." "You did not listen to me, Martha," I rejoined, "when I attempted to explain God's doings to you, and his manner of teaching us the difficult Christian graces. Your temper runs away with you; and I fear you will make yourself a great deal more miserable than you need be, for want of a little cool consideration, and good advice. If you would but calm yourself for a short time, and hear what I have to say, so as to understand me, I am confident that I could soon bring you to think very differently from what you seem to do now, both of yourself and of your condition. Will you undertake this, Martha; or must I go on speaking to the winds; or shall I leave you to your own fancies?"

This speech had a due effect; at least it put an end to her murmurs and petulance for the present; and she begged that I would not leave her so hastily, but be kind enough to teach her better. "Consider, then," I said, "and tell me what you yourself should suppose that all your neighbours here would naturally think to be the first cause of your calamities; reasoning upon the matter, as we generally do in such cases, and putting God quite out of the question." She was silent, and seemed extremely reluctant to answer me; for she saw in a moment, that if she could not shift the blame upon God, she would be compelled to condemn herself, out of her own mouth, for the hastiness and imprudence of her marriage. A pause ensued, and then her mother interposed, and said, "Why, child, you know very well that your marriage was the first cause of all this; and why should you try to hide it from the Doctor? Do you think that he has never heard any thing about it?" Martha was still silent; so I continued, "The marriage certainly appears to be one of the immediate causes of the poverty and sickness with which she is now afflicted. Was she not richer than most young women are, when she was living in Mrs. Bryan's service?" "Yes, that I was," she answered eagerly for herself, "and in good health too, and very happy besides; but that wretch came, Sir, and spoiled me of every thing; and now you see what I am; he is the cause, Sir, he is the cause of all." "But were you forced to marry him?" I inquired. Here again she hesitated; but her mother exclaimed, "No, that she wasn't, Sir,

poor thing, it was against her father's and mother's advice." "Such marriages seldom turn out happily," said Mrs. Warton. "Yes, Madam," replied poor Martha, "but what could I do? It was fit that I should marry some time or other, and this young man appeared to be so much above the rest of my equals, and promised so fair, that I was unwilling to lose such a match." "How long had you known him, Martha before, you consented to marry him?" I asked again. Poor Martha, was distressed, and her mother told the truth for her: "Ah! Sir," she said, "*that* was a bad business indeed; neither she nor any body else here knew any thing at all about him; he came from nobody knew where, and nobody knows where he is gone. But she had no guile herself, Sir, and she did not suspect *him* of any; so, poor thing, she is ruined by her simpleness."

Here Martha began to shed tears, and Mrs. Warton gave me a sign not to press her any further; but being fearful that I had not yet laid a sufficient foundation for my future reasonings, I asked again, addressing my question, however, to the mother, "What trade did this young man follow, whilst he remained in the parish, either before or since the marriage?" "Ah! Sir," answered the mother, "he was a seafaring man, and he could not settle his roving mind to any trade." "But how," I inquired, "did he intend to maintain your daughter and the family which she might bring, if she married him?" "Oh, Sir," she said, "he talked of this, that, and the other, as if any thing would suit him; and Mrs. Bryan, her good mistress, would have had her wait till he had fixed upon something, and had got things comfortable about him, but my poor daughter here would have her own way, and so this is the end of it." "I hope not," I replied; "I hope, on the contrary, that God has something good in store for her yet, but she must learn to look up to *him*, and too kiss the rod with which he corrects her; and then all this will turn to her profit, and God will bring good out of evil. The evil, you plainly see, she has brought upon herself, by indiscretion and rashness, and too great a confidence in her own judgment. God, indeed, permitted it by his providence, but he warned her to be careful, by the voice of her mistress and her parents; and when she slighted those warnings, he left her to herself, to walk in her own paths; and you perceive where they have led her. But all this time, I have no doubt, he is thinking of mercy; for now it is proved, by the fact, that poor Martha wants the virtues which I told you before were so precious in his sight; and nobody can be fit for heaven without them; and how she could get them without adversity I do not understand. But I will read the exhortation to the sick, which we have in our prayer-books; and then, perhaps, she will see this matter more clearly. Give me her prayer-book, good Mrs. Bilson."

The old lady now brought me Martha's Bible, all covered with dust, and when I told her that it was not what I wanted, she began to hunt about for a prayer-book; but all in vain. Ah! I thought to myself there is no course of real religion in this family; no regular exercise of prayer, private or public; no devout supplications to heaven for strength to stand upright, or to bear the burdens of life, and to improve by them. This accounts for every thing that I see. At length the daughter herself desired her mother to look into an old chest, which stood in one corner of the room; and whilst she was fumbling about to no purpose, as it seemed, amongst the heaps of things which the chest contained, I said to Martha, with a tone of sorrow, "Ah! Martha, Martha, you are too like your namesake in the gospel—you are troubled about many things, but the one thing most needful you sadly, I fear neglect. God was not enough in your thoughts when you were well and happy; and you think of him as little now, when you are ill and miserable; or you think of him only as a cruel taskmaster. But if you will believe *me*, you were more miserable then than you are now; for then there was no hope of saving your soul, good as you thought yourself; but now there is, if you will listen to *me*, and pray to God to help you."

She was abashed by my rebuke, and wept, and said nothing; yet I fancied that she was not convinced of any deficiency in herself. Her mother was still fumbling; so at last she cried out rather petulantly to her, to take all the things out of the chest, and lay them on the floor; and that then she could not miss the prayer-book, which, she was sure, was there. This being done, however, very awkwardly, the book was not found, so Mrs. Warton hastened to the old lady's assistance, and, having better eyes, soon espied something in one corner, which, being brought to light, proved to be a New Testament, given to Martha by the Bible-Society, thus carefully laid up, and now become mouldy. She dived a second time into another corner, and out came the lurking, wished-for Liturgy, which was immediately recognized, and put into my hands; so I read both the exhortations to her with all the emphasis and solemnity that I could, and she seemed to be much more quiet and tranquil; but I feared that it was mere appearance, without any reality. I tried her, therefore, in the following manner, taking the exhortations for my guide, and beginning anew, to be more sure of my ground:—

"Do you understand and believe, Martha, what you have just heard; that God has the supreme power over life and death, and that he can cut down in a moment the young, the strong, the healthy, as well as the old, the weak, the sick?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "I know it too well, and it is a dreadful thing to think of." "And have not men," I asked, "in some respects the same

sort of power? Cannot they, if they will, bring every sort of evil upon one another; and even kill one another?" "To be sure they can, Sir," she replied. "But not without God's leave, can they?" I asked. "No, Sir, to be sure," she answered, "not without his leave." "And does not one person," I asked again, "often do something which is painful to another person, not for the sake of hurting him, but for the sake of doing him good?" She hesitated, as if she did not comprehend me; so I inquired if she had ever seen Mrs. Clayton whip any of her scholars. "Yes, *that* I have," she answered, "and severely too; but they deserved it, Sir." "So then," I said, "she did it for their good, and not because she had any pleasure in hurting them?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "*that* was her reason, I have no doubt." "Very well," I said; "and now take a different case: have you not heard of wicked persons, such as robbers and murderers, being put to death by the executioner?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "but I could never bear to see such a sight, no, not, even if the wicked wretch who haunts me continually, and who deserves to die a hundred times, if it were possible—not even if he were to come to such a disgraceful end, as he ought to do, could I bear to see it; but I should be glad to hear of it though, and I should think, too, that God was just."

She uttered this sentiment with a fierce tone of vengeance, and seemed to dwell upon it in her imagination with an extraordinary delight; her eye brightening up, and her cheek reddening with a tinge of fire. I was about to rebuke her again, but fearing to be led astray from the argument just commenced, and certain that I could do no good with her in other respects, till this was settled, I merely said, "Peace, Martha! we will talk of that hereafter; but now only tell me whether you cried out against Mrs. Clayton and the executioner, and accused and blamed them for what they did, when you saw or heard of their inflicting punishments?" "To be sure I did not, Sir," she answered at once. "Probably you did not," I said, "because you thought the punishments just, and inflicted with a good object, namely, to amend those who were punished, or to deter others from committing the same crimes, and thus to secure the public welfare and happiness." "*That* is it," she replied, "without doubt, Sir." "But, on the other hand," I said, "if a very strong man were to knock down all whom he met in the streets, and who had never injured him, and break their limbs, and do them other mischiefs, would not you cry out loudly against him?" "Yes, indeed," she exclaimed, "for his conduct would be unjust." "Truly so," I said; "and it would be an arbitrary exercise of his superior strength; he knocks them down, not caring whether rightly or wrongly, but merely to show that he has power to do so. It seems then, Martha, that you would

cry out against all pain that was given unjustly, and not against that which is given justly?" "*That* is my feeling, Sir," she answered. "So, therefore," I continued, "if I saw you crying out in that manner, my good Martha, I might be sure in my own mind, that you thought that either you yourself or somebody else had suffered pain unjustly; might I not?" "You might, Sir," she replied. "And also," I said, "that the person causing the pain, or permitting it when able to hinder it, was an unjust person?" "Yes Sir," she answered, "and *that* too." "Well then," I said, "you have told me already, that you are aware of the great power of God; and you seemed to acknowledge, both before and now, that no calamities can happen to any body without his permission, at the least, and the direction of his providence; although others might be the immediate causes of them; and in some degree, or rather chiefly, your own indiscretion is the cause in your own case: this you appear to know; and on the other hand, I have heard myself, and all the people in this house have heard, again and again, how much you cry out, and murmur, and repine, under these calamities of yours: therefore I must conclude, I suppose, from your own reasoning, that you have a strong sense and feeling of God's injustice, for having suffered, if not having actually caused, these evils to come upon you. Shall I be right in supposing such a thing of you?"

Here Martha was reduced to a great strait, and knew not what to answer; or at least she was very reluctant to say any thing: so her mother endeavoured to shield her, by assuring me that her daughter was not so ignorant about God, and that her complaints were against the wicked man who had betrayed and ruined her. "And then, Sir," she added, "her disorders are uncommon, and her pains are very great, and she has been hitherto unused to pain; so I hope you will forgive her, if she is not so easy under it as she might be." "Oh!" I said, "I forgive her very readily, and I pity her from my heart, and I have no doubt that her pain, both of body and mind, is difficult to bear, especially at present. But what I wish to guard her against is, not so much her wailing and lamenting on account of the pain, however troublesome and distressing it may be to herself and those who attend upon her, but all murmuring against God, and all feeling of malice or revenge towards any of her fellow-creatures; these are the bad things which must be utterly rooted out, or her soul will be ruined, as well as her body. And I must own I do not think that poor Martha sees very clearly yet, that it is quite impossible for God to be cruel or unjust. By her reasoning, you perceive, and by her conduct and speeches, she makes him to be very unjust, and she has even called him cruel. Do you know," I said, turning to the sick woman herself. "why men are cruel and unjust?"

"No, indeed, Sir," she answered; "I cannot tell exactly." "Why," I continued, "there are various reasons which we may easily imagine—the man, who knocked the people down in the streets at random, might have done it merely to show his strength, and from some strange delight which he had in doing mischief, without wishing to get any thing by it; might he not?" "He might, certainly," she replied; "and I do not see how he could get any good by it." "Very well," I said; "do you think that God ever does harm to any body merely to show his strength?" She seemed to be afraid of answering this question; so I continued—"In your case, Martha, at least, it is clear, that God has not done any thing to show his strength; indeed it is more likely that none of your neighbours consider God as having any concern in the matter at all; every thing has happened so naturally. When God strikes down a man in the midst of health, youth, and vigour, and still more when he destroys a city, all at once, by the mighty shock of an earthquake, then people, in their astonishment and terror, see his hand clearly enough, and adore it; and then he may be said to show his strength, whether he act with that view, or not. We must look, therefore, for some other reason, in order to explain your own case; and if you consider, you will find that men are cruel and unjust, because they think to gain something by being so, or to gratify some evil passion. But you do not suppose, I presume, that God has any thing to gain by injustice or cruelty? Do you know of any thing which God wants for any purpose whatever—any thing eatable, or drinkable, or for show and finery?" "No, indeed, Sir," she answered; "I am not so foolish." "Oh! then," I said, "he hurts people, perhaps, in order to gratify some evil passion; is this your notion of him? Does he delight, do you think, in seeing the misery of mankind, and in knowing that he himself has caused it, and that he has caused it only to make them miserable?"

I twisted this question into various forms; but, partly from being unable to comprehend it, as I conjectured, and still more from a reluctancy, as I conjectured also, to give up the idea that she herself was unjustly and cruelly punished, she made me no answer; so I asked her if she had ever met with a *man* of that description. "Yes, Sir," she answered immediately, "*that* I have; and many a one." "And what did you call them," I inquired, "bad men or good men?" "Bad men, Sir," she replied at once, and in a decisive tone. "And what do you call God; a bad being or a good one?" She hesitated; so I inquired what sort of a being she considered the devil to be; good or bad. "Oh! bad, Sir," she exclaimed, eagerly; "as bad as bad can be." "Very well," I said; "and now tell me, whether you suppose God and the devil to be friends or foes to one another." "Foes," she answered; "there

can be no doubt of *that*." "Then it is likely," I said, "is it not, that they are very different from one another, and that they pursue after different things?" "Yes," she replied; "it is so certainly." "And does not the devil," I said, "as far as we know any thing about him, pursue always after mischief, for the sake of mischief; hurting men to please himself; and trying to bring us all into his own place of torment, that he may make us as miserable as possible, and lighten his own misery by having partners in it, and thereby also vex God Almighty himself, if he could by any means do so?" "*That* is what he wishes, I have no doubt, Sir," she answered. "Then God being a foe to the devil, and a different being," I said, "and pursuing different things, it is probably his object and wish to do all the good that is possible, both to please himself, and to counteract his wicked enemy, and to make men happy, and to bring them at last to heaven, to see and to share in his own happiness: is not this agreeable to reason, and is not this also what our Bibles tell us of him? and the Bible, Martha, is God's own word, you know."

To all this, when it had been placed before her under different aspects, she at length fully, though not cordially, assented; so I asked her, since it was now agreed upon between us, that God was desirous of making us all happy, both in time and in eternity, whether she thought that he could do it for us all, so various as we are, by the same means? "No," she answered; "I should suppose, Sir, that he must use different means with different people." "You are right," I said; "if there were a rich man, for instance, like Dives in the parable of our Lord, and he spent all his riches upon himself, showing himself abroad every day with his servants, his horses, his carriages, suffering his poor sick neighbours to starve and die for want of food, clothing, and medicine, whilst his own table was covered with the most costly fare, and his person guarded and adorned with the warmest and finest clothes, appropriate to every change of season, and the most skilful physicians are ready to fly to his aid upon the first symptom even of an imaginary disease, would you call this rich man happy?" "No, Sir," she replied; "*that* I wouldn't, whatever he might call himself." "Very true," I said; "for you would justly think that what will bring a man to hell-fire, as it did Dives, could never be properly called happiness; and that men living in that manner, and fancying it supreme happiness to do so, would find themselves to be woefully mistaken in the end." "I should, Sir, indeed," she answered. "Well, but," I said, "God wishes to make this wealthy, proud, thoughtless man happy hereafter at all events, and here too, if it were possible. How, then, is it to be done? For example, how shall he teach him to have pity and compassion upon those who are far beneath him and in distress—a

Christian feeling, without which, whatever may become of him here, he will never get to heaven hereafter? Do you know any more natural or certain way than by reducing him to poverty, that he may learn, by his own experience, what it is to be hungry without food, and naked without clothing, and sick without medicine, and so be brought by degrees to pity those who are in a similar condition?" "No, Sir," she replied; "I know of no surer or better way than this." "But he will be very much dissatisfied himself," I said, "will he not, with being hurled at once from riches to poverty?" "It is very likely, Sir, indeed," she answered. "And perhaps also," I said, "he will call God cruel and unjust, or think him so; will he not?"

Here she paused for a moment, and I expected that she would be deeply conscience-struck with this question; but soon she answered fearlessly, that the rich man might do so, but that he would be in the wrong. In fact, her circumstances were apparently so different, that probably she made no direct application at all to herself at present. So I continued, "Yes, indeed, he would be in the wrong undoubtedly; for, instead of being cruel and unjust, God is precisely the very contrary: he is merciful, you see, in the highest degree; he might have cut off such a man at once, to punish the man himself, and to warn others by a terrible judgment; but he spares his life, and only chastises him with the rod of affliction in this world, that he may save his precious, immortal soul in the next. And what is this world to any man at the very longest; suppose him, if you will, to live to a hundred years?" "Why, Sir," she answered, "it will seem short enough, when it is gone." "Yes, indeed," I said, "very short, in comparison with the next, which will never end; so that what signify pain, or poverty, or any thing else of that sort, which foolish men call misery, if they last so short a time, and train us up for that more important state which will last for ever? Do you know, Martha, that there will be different degrees of happiness in heaven?" "Yes, Sir," she replied; "I have heard so." "And also," I asked again, "that we shall be rewarded *there*, according to what we have done well, and suffered well, *here*?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "I have read *that* in my Bible." "Suppose, then," I said, "Martha, if you please, a whole life of suffering; and suppose the suffering person to gain in consequence of it a much higher place in heaven than he would otherwise have done, if he got to heaven at all; do you think he would complain?" "Not then, Sir, I dare say," she replied; "when the suffering is all over, and the joy is come." "Why, yes," I said, "he will then do nothing but rejoice, and bless God for sending the evil which had purchased for him so much greater good. Will not this be his feeling?" "Without doubt, Sir, it will," she answered. "True," I said; "and even whilst

he is under the pain of the suffering, yet if he does what God commands, and has a perfect faith and trust in all God's promises, will he not be always looking forward to, and longing after, the happiness which is to come hereafter, and thinking and striving to get a larger share of it?" "He ought to do so, Sir," she replied.— "Well," I said, "and will not this reflection bear up his mind under all his pain and trouble, and give him even a sort of joy in his very sufferings, and cause him to bless God for afflicting him, whilst he prays that he may become what God wishes him to be?"

Thus after a long and desultory conversation, I was now come round again to the point from which I had set out, and this last question went home, I believe, to Martha's bosom, for she attempted no answer, but became on the sudden quite speechless. However, I pressed her still further by asking her whether such a person would murmur and complain of God's dealings with him, and call God cruel and unjust; or, if he did, whether she thought that God would receive him into heaven at all. Here she began to tremble, and to show other signs of great agitation; so Mrs. Warton interposed, and said, "I am sure, Dr. Warton, that poor Martha will think and act differently now from what she has done hitherto; but you must not talk with her any longer at present, for she is very weak, and should be kept quiet, I perceive. Will you pray for her, that she may have the gift of patience, and then leave her for a little while to *me*?" "By all means," I answered; so we knelt down, and I read the shortest prayer in the Visitation Service, inserting at the proper place a petition for the kindred graces of fortitude, of patience, and resignation. This being done, and the benediction pronounced, I rose and went down stairs; Mrs. Warton remaining after me to make a fuller inquiry into the sick woman's necessities.

Below, I found the good old lady upon the point of beginning her dinner, with one of her grandchildren in attendance upon her. I had before observed a pot smoking on the fire, and now it had produced a piece of bacon and some greens, which were set upon a small table by the side of the easy chair. "Shall I say grace for you, Mrs. Clayton," I exclaimed, as I came in sight of her; and she answered immediately, "If you will do me such a favour, Sir, I shall be very proud of it." So I said grace, and she apologized for not being able to stand, but she clasped her hands with devotion and evidently showed, that, in his gifts, she saw *Him* that was invisible. However, as she was rather in a bustle and trepidation, and did not seem to be able to dine comfortably while I was present with her, I took my leave, and paced up and down in the road in front of the cottage till Mrs. Warton rejoined me.

As we walked homewards together, she informed me about Martha's circumstances. Her father and mother, it appeared, were

not parishioners of ours, though old inhabitants of the parish; but she herself had acquired a legal settlement amongst us by service, and her marriage, whether legal or illegal, had made no practical alteration. If the marriage was illegal, which she herself supposed, and therefore had resumed her maiden name, the case was clear that she belonged to *us*; if legal, yet the settlement of her husband was undiscoverable. On this ground, therefore, the officers of the parish had decided to allow her half-a-crown weekly during her sickness, and they left the rest to her parents, who had no other child, and to the friends whom Martha had gained for herself. Upon the whole, these resources being partly insufficient, and partly precarious, we felt ourselves called upon to interpose, both personally and as the almoners of our rich and well-disposed neighbours. But poor Martha was as grateful to those who were kind to her, as she was bitter against those who injured her; so she became exceedingly attached to Mrs. Warton and myself, and the more inclined on that account to yield to our arguments and admonitions, and to believe the truth, and feel the importance of the doctrines which we inculcated upon her. Before the next conversation, she had received some substantial favours from us, and the good effect was visible enough.

After I left her to Mrs. Warton at this first visit, she expressed a great fear, lest she might have offended me by speaking her opinions too openly and unwarily. "No," replied Mrs. Warton, "you may set yourself quite at ease in that respect; Dr. Warton too often meets with persons who are not sufficiently resigned to the afflicting dispensations of Providence: it is, indeed, a very difficult lesson to learn, especially if there seem to be no wickedness in the sufferer to account at once for the afflictions. If people are wicked, Martha, you can understand, I suppose, that God may send afflictions upon them as a punishment, without being liable himself to the charge of cruelty or injustice?" "Yes, Madam," she answered, "I understaud *that* very well." "And if God should send these afflictions," continued Mrs. Warton, "not merely to punish the wicked, but to reclaim them from their wickedness, and thus to save them, what would you think of it then?" "Why, Madam," she replied, "I should think that God was very gracious to them." "You would think rightly, without doubt," said Mrs. Warton. "Then your only difficulty, Martha, is about the sufferings which come upon those who appear to *you* to be good already—is that so?" "Yes, Madam, that *was* my difficulty," she answered, "but the Doctor has done it away in part." "I am glad to hear it," said Mrs. Warton, "and I hope he will be able to do it away altogether: I am sure he will try, were he ever so much offended with you; but he is not offended, and you may depend upon seeing him often." "He will be very good to come to

me," she replied; and so Mrs. Warton took leave; and when she related this short conversation to me, it gave me great hopes of ultimate success.

Before I saw Martha Bilson again, I received a lamentable account of her from two medical men, surgeons and apothecaries in the parish, whom I had requested to hold a consultation upon her case. They informed me, that her life might be saved, but that her health would be never, in all probability, restored; and, amongst other things which this poor creature was likely to undergo, they apprehended the formation of a fistula—which eventually occurred, and was a source of constant distress to her. However, at my next visit, I found her apparently much better; and Mrs. Clayton told me, as I passed through her room, that Martha had ceased to fret with the same violence as formerly, and was beginning to be able to keep her sorrows to herself. "She may make them known to God," I said, "in prayer for submission and thankfulness. Those are heavenly graces, Mrs. Clayton; and when God has given them to her, she will be fit for heaven," "Yes, indeed!" said the good old lady, whilst she clasped her hands, and lifted her eyes upwards with devotion, as if she were asking for the same Christian virtues for herself. The sight arrested me for a moment; it was pleasing, and striking as a mere portrait, but it betokened a soul aspiring to be amongst the saints above.

"Well, my poor Martha," I said gently, when I was close to the sick-bed, "I hope that what I hear is true; both that your pain is lessened, and your fortitude and patience increased: so we shall have two things to be thankful for to God." "Yes, Sir," she answered rather doubtingly, my pain, perhaps, is lessened; but the doctors tell me a sad story." "It may be very wise of *them*," I said, "to let you know before hand the worst which they fear may come that you may be well prepared for it, and not be to much cast down by any thing sudden and unexpected. But what matters it, come what may, if your fortitude and patience increase so much as to enable you to bear it as a Christian should." "Ah! Sir," she replied, "pain is a very terrible thing; and I see nothing but poverty and a workhouse before my eyes continually; and yet, if I have been rash, I have never been a wicked woman, Sir." "No, indeed, Martha," I said, "I believe not; but we will not talk of *that* now; you will understand it better some time hence. We will talk of your sickness and your poverty, which, at all events, may make you, and are intended to make you, a far better woman than you could ever have been without them. But you are terrified with the thought of the pain which your disorders will occasion you, and of the difficulties and troubles which will spring from poverty. Suppose however, if you will, that your pain should increase ever so much, but that God, being entreated for you, should

increase in the same degree your ability to bear it; and suppose also that God should raise you up friends to keep you from the work-house, and lighten the distress of poverty, what would you think then? Would not a great deal of pain and a great deal of trouble, with a full power to bear them, be much better than a little pain and a little trouble without any such power?"

This was no axiom to poor Martha; and after a while, when she had turned the question about in her thoughts, she said, "If I might be so bold, Sir, I should think that the little pain and trouble was better than the great deal." "Well, but," I rejoined, "suppose that you were to gain a thousand pounds by the great deal, and nothing by the little, what would you say then?" "*That* alters the case very much indeed, Sir," she replied. "So that, in such a case," I said, "you would choose the great deal; would you not?" "Yes, Sir, *that* I would," she answered, with eagerness enough. "And which is best," I asked, "a thousand pounds, or heaven?" She was struck, but still she hesitated what to say; at length, however, she allowed that heaven must certainly be better than a thousand pounds. "Yes," I continued, "better than all the treasures of gold and silver which all the kings and rich men in the world ever heaped up together. But put the gain out of your thoughts for a moment, and tell me, whether you ever saw a person crying, and sobbing, and storming, and raging, and beating her breast, and tearing her hair, and all for a very little matter?" "I have, to be sure, Sir," she replied; "but I hope you do not mean *me*, Sir; mine is no small matter." "No, I do not mean *you*, Martha," I said; "you have suffered greatly. However, tell me again, whether you have ever seen a person who has suffered greatly, bearing it greatly too; that is, without any such passionate signs of utter sorrow and despair?" With infinite reluctance she confessed that she had, and seemed to be beginning to be ashamed of her own weakness. "And which person did you admire most," I inquired; "her that was passionate, or her that was resigned?" "I wondered at *her* that was so resigned, Sir," she answered; "but I did not admire the other at all." "And which," I inquired again, "do you think was the more miserable and wretched of the two?" "The passionate one," she replied. "And yet the passionate one," I said, "had but little to grieve for, whilst the calm and resigned woman had much." "It is very true," she answered. "Then," I said, "our being wretched and miserable, or not, depends chiefly upon our being able to bear, or not, the calamities which come upon us; does it not?" She hesitated, but she allowed it. "So then, after all," I said, "we come at last to the same question as before, and which now you will be very well prepared to answer; namely, whether a great deal of pain and trouble, with an equal degree of fortitude

and patience to bear it, be not a better thing than a little pain and trouble with none?" "Why, Sir," she replied, "I understand you very well now, and what you say is very true; and I wish I had more fortitude and patience myself; but it is very hard to get them. Besides, Sir, when a person suffers, as I do, and am likely to do, without having been wicked, it requires greater fortitude and greater patience to bear it without complaining. A wicked person has no right to complain on account of afflictions; he deserves them."

Poor Martha was always harping upon this string; her fancied goodness, and the consequent hardship of being punished; for all affliction in her view was punishment. I did not consider her as yet ripe for any discussion of her merits, and therefore I waved that subject as before, and reminded her now of the gain, the thousand pounds that we had talked of, the higher place in heaven which was to be got by the patient endurance and the proper improvement of her afflictions.—"This hope," I said, "is the support of all the good. A bad man can only expect by suffering in this world to escape the more terrible sufferings of the next; but a good one is encouraged to expect an abundant and exceeding measure of reward, heaped up and running over. He thinks, therefore, of this reward, and his afflictions become light; and he knows that hereafter, when he looks back upon the time during which he was afflicted in this world, it will appear to be no more than a pin's point; it will almost vanish out of his sight, and be forgotten; or if remembered, it will be remembered only with joy, as having been the cause of a greater happiness."

Here I stopped, to see what effect my reasoning had produced; and as she gave me no answer, I concluded that she was too much buried in present sensible things, and rendered incapable thereby of elevating her mind to things future and spiritual. Her faith, I thought, must be of the very lowest description, without any life or vigour. At length it occurred to me to question her in the following manner:—

"Were you ever troubled with the tooth-ache, Martha?" "Yes, indeed, Sir," she answered, "when I was very young, I had it bad enough; and I verily feared that I should have gone distracted with it." "Did you know what it proceeded from?" I inquired. "Oh, yes, Sir," she replied; "it was caused by a rotten tooth." "Then, I suppose, you had the tooth drawn at once," I said; "had you not?" "To be sure I had, Sir," she answered. "Well, Martha," I said, "but did you not tremble at the thought of the very sharp pain which would be occasioned by the drawing of the tooth?" "Why, Sir," she replied, "I own I did not like the thought of it; but then I knew very well that the pain would only be for a moment, and that I might never have the tooth-ache

again : so I went to the dentist courageously (I forget his name, Sir,) and I did not flinch much when he pulled out the tooth, because I was determined to bear it." "Very well," I said ; "and what has been the consequence?" "I have never had the tooth-ache since," she answered. "And how long is that?" I asked. She considered for an instant, and then told me it was about ten years. "So that," I said, "the pain of drawing the tooth was only the business of a moment or two ; but the ease procured by it has lasted for ten years." "Just so, Sir," she replied. "Well then, Martha," I said, "now tell me, what is a moment in comparison with ten years?" "Nothing, Sir," she answered ; "it is not worth considering at all." "But you still remember, I suppose, do you not, the sharpness of the pain?" I inquired. "Oh, yes, Sir," she replied, "I remember it very well ; it hurt me terribly." "Then, perhaps," I said, "whenever you think of it, even now at this distance of time, you cry out against the poor dentist, and murmur at him for it?" "No, indeed," she answered with animation, "I am not so foolish as that comes to ; I never cried out against him at all, neither since, nor even then : he meant me no harm ; he meant me good ; but he could not give me the good without some pain first ; so I thanked him at the time, and have been thankful to him ever since."

Well, thought I to myself, this is very strange, if she sees this reasoning about the tooth so clearly and perfectly, and yet does not apply it to her present circumstances and her future prospects. I paused, therefore, to give her time to reflect ; but, as she seemed quite vacant, I asked her if the dentist loved her? "Oh! no, Sir," she replied quickly, "not *he* ; he never saw me or heard of me before in his life." "But," I said, "he took care, I suppose, to give you as little pain as possible, for the sake of his own reputation, that you might spread his name abroad, and get him more business?" "It is very likely, Sir," she answered. "But what," I said, "if he had loved you into the bargain, as your good mother there, for instance, loves her daughter—would he not have been ten times as careful, if possible, to give you no more pain than what might be absolutely unavoidable, in order to procure you the ease and comfort of being free from tooth-ache?" "I suppose he would, Sir," she replied.

Here again, thought I, she is upon the verge of what she wants, and yet she does not appear to see it. So I asked her successively, whether God was not the father of us all? Whether it was not natural that fathers should love their children? Whether the wisest and best of fathers did not love their children in the highest degree? Whether God was not the wisest and the best of beings ; wiser and better than all the wisest and best men in the world ; so wise as to know perfectly both what is most profitable for his crea-

tures, and how to bring it about in the most profitable manner; and so good besides, as to be always disposed to do for them what he knows will be profitable, and also to do it with the least possible pain? To all these questions she answered affirmatively, and without hesitation, except to the last. When I had advanced so far, she seemed to perceive distinctly that the whole argument was aimed against herself, and she could not reconcile her own circumstances with it; however, at length, but with a dubious countenance, she allowed it. She would have said, perhaps, if she had known how to do so, "Your theory is right, but it is overthrown by facts:" but then her facts were merely assumptions, and not founded in truth; and her faith not being strong enough to be any evidence to her of things unseen and future, these future unseen things, that might come she knew not when, or even not at all, had but a weak effect upon her heart and affections. Still, as she had in words at least granted every thing, I now recalled to her recollection what she had said about the dentist; namely, that she had not only submitted to the pain which he gave her without a single murmur, but that she had submitted also with thankfulness; "and yet the dentist," I continued, "had no love for you whatever, nor were you sure that he was one of the wisest or most skilful of his profession. How much more then ought you to submit cheerfully and with thanksgiving, according to the exhortations which I read to you yesterday, to your heavenly Father's hand, whensoever, by any manner of adversity, it shall please him to visit you? For you allowed that he was the wisest and best of beings; and I am sure that every page of Scripture, and the whole world around us, prove, beyond the possibility of doubt, that he loves us all with unutterable love; and that, like as a father pitieth his own children, even so does *He* pity *us* in our fallen state, and desire to raise us up from it, and exalt us to heaven."

I paused here for her answer, and she seemed to be revolving in her mind what to say, as on former occasions when she was hard pushed; but, before she had determined, her mother, who was not biassed by the same prejudice, or disturbed by the same passion, was rather disposed to upbraid her for appearing to make difficulties, and so she cried out with a little mixture of anger, "Why, child, it as plain as a pike-staff, what the Doctor says to you.—These troubles have taken away her senses, Sir," she continued, turning her face towards me; "she had not used to be so dull." Then turning again towards her daughter, she said, "God is wise above all others; God is good above all others; God loves you too; ay, indeed, he loves you more than I do, who am your own mother. Whatever he sends, therefore, you must be content with—no, no, *that* is too little, you must thank him for it." This was

excellent for a person whom I had considered before to be very ignorant; so I commended her highly, and added, "You are quite right; you understand the thing perfectly; and I dare say, you see besides that, when we murmur, it is not only the same as charging God with cruelty and injustice, but it is to set up our own wisdom against the wisdom of God; to pretend that we are wiser than he is, and that we know what is good for us better than he does. But surely this would be very foolish, and very wicked too."

"Yes, indeed," said the old lady, "and I hope my poor child here will leave it off altogether. She is very much improved in one day, Sir; and now the thing is explained to *me*, I can talk to her about it when your honour is away." "Do so," I rejoined, "and consider this also, that, let your daughter do whatever she may, God will have his own will done after all, and not her's, unless she is stronger than *him*. Shall we ask her this question, whether she thinks herself stronger than God?" Here Martha herself was roused a little, and cried out, "No, dear Sir; do not ask me such a question as *that*; I have read about God's power, and I know that it is almighty, and that it is useless to strive against it." "Yes," I said, "all striving against God's power, and murmuring at what he does, or permits others to do, is useless, as you are able yourself to see; but I wonder that you do not see also how unwise and dangerous it is. If God were like a man, what do you think he would do to those who resisted him, or murmured at him?" She trembled exceedingly, and replied with a faltering voice, "Why, perhaps, Sir, he would punish them the worse for it." "Yes, indeed," I said, "but God is what the Scriptures call 'long-suffering;' that is, he bears with our sins and follies, and spares us even when we deserve punishment, until, in his great mercy, he has tried every method of kindness towards us; and when this kindness has failed to reclaim us, and we continue to provoke him more and more, and repine at his dispensations, then indeed it may be expected that he will arise to take vengeance upon us: yet even then the blow which he inflicts, considered as a punishment, will be no heavier than the correction of a father, and it will have a father's object in view, namely, the improvement of the child. Is not so gracious a being, then, to be loved and adored by us with every faculty that we have? And are not all his doings towards us to be received with thankfulness? For thus the object being attained, it is likely that he will see fit to withdraw his hand, and remove the burden which oppresses us, or adapt our strength to the bearing of it; so that we may become, like Job, examples of patience to our neighbours whilst we live here, and be rewarded beyond all conception, before men and angels, hereafter."

"Ah! well, Sir," said Martha in reply, "I wish heartily that I was convinced of all this, and then, perhaps, I should be as patient

and thankful as another; but I will do my best, Sir, to be what you desire me to be, because I know that you will give me good advice, and because I see that it may be dangerous to be otherwise." "Certainly, Martha," I said, "the advice which I give you is good: and it is a commendable thing to follow good advice, and to avoid dangers. But I would have you to be what I desire, not simply because I desire it, or because you fear God's anger, but from a still better principle. You pray to God, Martha, do you not?" "To be sure I do Sir," she answered immediately, with a look of surprise at my question. "And when you pray," I inquired, "do you sometimes repeat the Lord's prayer?" "Yes, very often, Sir," she replied. "Well, then," I said, "one of the petitions in the Lord's prayer is, that God's will may be done in earth as it is in Heaven; when you uttered it, did you always think attentively and particularly what it meant?"

Here she began to muse, and to try, as it seemed, for the first time, to understand with her mind what she had so often repeated with her lips; I helped her, therefore, in this manner:—"There are angels, Martha, in heaven, are there not?" I asked. "Yes, Sir," she answered, "so we are told." "And they are very good, and very happy, are they not?" I asked again. "Yes Sir," she replied there is no doubt of it," "Now tell me then," I said, "whether you think that these blessed spirits could be good or happy if they disobeyed the will of God?" "No, indeed," she answered. "and I should think too, that, if they were bad, he would not suffer them to live with him any longer; and then you know, Sir, they *must* be unhappy." "Yes," I said, "if they were not punished in any other way, the very memory of what they had lost would be enough to torment them for ever." "Ay, ay, Sir," she exclaimed with great feeling, "it is a bitter thing to remember pleasures that are gone by, and which we know that we can never have again." I took no notice of this evident allusion to herself, but said, "Well Martha, and what makes the angels so good and so happy? Is it not because they always do the will of God, and never disobey him in any thing? We call them good, do we not, because they do God's will? and their doing it makes them happy, or rather it is itself the main part of their happiness. Do you understand this?" "I understand it very well," she answered, "and I believe it too?"

"Now then," I said, "let us see what beings there are on this earth to do God's will." "Why, Sir, there are men, and no others," she interposed with quickness. "Yes," I said, "there is the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the clouds, and the winds, and the waves; and you forget what numbers of animals there are besides men. Do not all these obey God, and execute his will without the slightest failure?" "It is very true, Sir," she replied,

"I did not think of those things. But then you know, Sir, they cannot do otherwise than they do, if they wished it ever so much." "You are right," I said; "some of them have no life, and none of them have reason, as a man has; so they have no power of choosing, like men, what is good, or what is bad; they obey from necessity. Still their obedience brings glory to God without bringing any credit to themselves; because it is always glorious to a workman, (and God is the greatest and most wonderful workman that ever was,) when his works proceed without failure precisely as he has ordained and appointed. But it would be more glorious to him, would it not, if men obeyed him?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "because they may disobey him, if they like." "True," I said, "their obedience and their disobedience are both from choice, and not from necessity. If man obeyed God by necessity, he would be no more pleased with it than he is with the obedience of the sun or moon; but when they choose to obey him, having at the same time the power to disobey him, or, in other words, when they follow *his* will and not their own, then it is very glorious both for *him* and for themselves too—is it not?" "To be sure it is, Sir," she replied. "But it is difficult sometimes, Martha," I said, "is it not, to give up our own will, and to do the will of God only?" "I dare say it must be, Sir," she answered. "Does not God require of us always to speak the truth?" I asked. "Yes, Sir," she said; "and I have always been careful to do it." "I am glad of it," I continued; "but a man may sometimes get a great deal of money by telling a lie, or escape some severe punishment; may he not?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "he may, indeed." "Suppose then," I said, "that he tells the truth, and scorns the money, or the punishment, will not God be very much pleased, and glorified too?" "Without doubt, Sir," she replied. "The man's own will," I said, "might be to get the money, to save him from poverty, or to escape the punishment, to save him from pain; but then this cannot be done without telling a lie: so God's will and his own will are at variance with each other; and the man chooses God's will, although apparent evil goes with it, (namely, pain or poverty,) rather than his own will, although it would have been attended with seeming profit or pleasure. Is not this excellent, and will it not procure God's especial favour?" "We may be sure of it," she replied. "So then," I said, "the man may think with himself—I am very poor in this world for speaking the truth, but I know where I am the richer for it; I have laid up a treasure in heaven; I am rich with God. And, if he were fully persuaded of this, would he not be far happier in his poverty than if he had all the wealth under the sun?" "He would indeed," she answered. "Yet," I said, "he knows nothing of any reward that he is to get from God, except by his faith; does

he? The evil is here immediate, and present to him every day; but except a good conscience, and the inward comfort and support of the Holy Spirit, all other reward is future and distant, perhaps, and to take place in a world of which he has no experience; so he must believe that there is such a world, and that it will be full of rewards and happiness, must he not, and his faith must make up for his want of sight?"

She gave me no answer to this, and I observed, that she seemed not quite to understand me; so I said, "The angels, Martha, know that there is such a happy place as heaven, because they see it, and live in it, and enjoy it, every moment; do we know the same fact in the same manner?" "No, indeed," she replied; "we shall not know it in that manner till we get there." "But how then do we know it now?" I asked. She was manifestly casting about for an answer; so I said, "Did not Jesus Christ tell us all about it in the Gospel?" "Oh! yes, Sir," she replied, hastily, "*that* is it; I had forgotten *that*." "And whatever Jesus Christ told us," I said, "should we not believe it?" "To be sure we ought," was her answer. "Well then, Martha," I said, "when we do this, we have faith; so the angels, you find, have sight to direct them, but men have faith only; and this explains what I mentioned before, that a man's faith must make up for his want of sight." "Yes, Sir," she replied; "I understand you now thoroughly." "So much the better," I said; "but the misfortune is, Martha, that the faith of men in general is very weak, and therefore they have not the same certainty about heaven as if they saw it with their eyes; and so they too often fall into sin, choosing their own will instead of God's. However, there are, I hope, and, I am sure, there have been, many men whose faith was as strong as their sight would have been. We talked just now about escaping punishment; do you know of any earthly punishment, generally speaking, worse than death?" "No, Sir, I know of none," she answered; "it is the finishing stroke. But a few days ago, Sir, so far was I from dreading it, that I thought it would have been the only relief to me from my sufferings, and I longed for it much more than for life. Once indeed, (I shudder whilst I tell you, Sir,) it came across me, (do not you mention it, mother,) that I might as well hasten it with my own hand." Here she turned quite pale, and for a moment was deprived of the power of utterance; "and," at length she continued, "if I had not seen you, Sir, God only knows what I might have been rash enough to do. Ah! Sir, death is a terrible thing; and I see now that it must be left to God."

The poor old mother stood aghast at this sad confession of her daughter's; and after a while she said, "I hope, child, I shall be deep in the ground before you do such a deed as *that*. Blessed be

the Lord that it has not happened yet!" As for myself, when I was somewhat recovered from the chill of horror which darted over me, I cried out, "Ay, indeed; you may well bless God; for where would her poor soul have been now?" "Yes, yes, Sir," exclaimed Martha herself; "it was wrong, very wrong in me; but my sufferings were greater than I could bear." "Very likely," I said, "without God's help; but with it you might bear any thing, and turn it to your profit too. You should have prayed to God, instead of thinking of rushing into his presence." "I did pray to him, Sir," she said. "To do what? I asked rapidly. "To take me, Sir," she answered, but with a tone of doubt, as if her prayer could hardly be justified. "Ah, Martha, Martha, you were very impatient, and very inconsiderate; but I will not blame you, as you seem disposed to blame yourself. See, however, according to what we have been talking about—see how you set up your own will against God's, and your own wisdom against *his*; whilst the only true wisdom is to have no will and no ends of your own, but to strive always to be what God has declared in Scripture that he wishes you to be, and to desire to have nothing but what he appoints for you. In truth, what he appoints for you must needs be always the best. You cannot be mistaken in this, unless it be a mistake to think him the wisest and best of beings."

I stopped and fancied that my poor patient was more deeply impressed with the argument than she had ever before appeared to be. She was evidently revolving it in her thoughts, and trying to make her faculties bow to the mighty force of truth. At length she exclaimed, in a sort of despair, "Oh! Sir, I want faith, I want faith—I am aware of it now. Without faith, Sir, as you have told me, to make up for want of sight, I can do nothing. The angels are always beholding the goodness and wisdom of God, and so they are sure that what he does is for the best; and this I suppose causes them to love him beyond every thing else; and when they do *that*, then there is no wonder that they should be obedient and happy. Such, Sir, are my poor thoughts about this matter."

"Very well, Martha," I said; "you are right about the angels; and it is a great step towards the improvement of yourself to know your own defects; and, when you do know them, if you will pray constantly and heartily to God to remedy those defects, he will certainly do it. One great defect, which you acknowledge yourself, is a weak and inefficient faith in the perfections and promises of God; but he will strengthen it in you, if you ask him to do so, and if you study day by day his holy Scriptures, and partake of his holy ordinances. A true and firm faith will enable you to endure every trial, and the very last extremity; yes, even to give your body to be burned with fire. I was going to tell you about these wonderful effects of faith, when our conversation took

another turn ; but you, perhaps, know something about it already.” “ Do you speak of the martyrs, Sir ? ” she asked. I nodded assent. She continued—“ One of my mistresses had a great book, Sir, about the sufferings of the martyrs, and the burning of men and women for their religion, which I used to read sometimes ; and it made me wonder very much how they could bear up, as they did, when the fire blazed all around them ; but now I see it was by their faith they did it : I fear that mine will never be any thing like to theirs.”

“ Do not despair, my good Martha,” I said ; even to-day, I hope, you have made some advances towards it. Do you not think that you can now offer up, not only with understanding, but also with sincerity, *that* petition of which I spoke in the Lord’s Prayer—“ Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven ? ” ” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered ; “ I shall always understand the meaning of it when I repeat it in future ; and I trust to be able to repeat it with sincerity, and from my heart ; but it is a hard thing to desire God’s will to be done, when it falls so heavy upon oneself.” “ A hard thing, Martha ! ” I said ; “ a hard thing ! when you know that God’s will is the best thing which can happen to you ? ” “ Ah ! Sir,” she replied, mournfully, “ we always come back to the same point—I want faith ; I want faith ! But pray for me, Sir, if you please.” “ By all means,” I said ; “ *that* is the way to get faith.” So I knelt down, and occupied myself for a few minutes with the Psalms most appropriate to her case, and then left her in peace.

At my next visit she was so much recovered as to be sitting up by the fire. Her father and mother were both present ; and a chair being placed for me, I sat down on the side opposite to her, and immediately began to congratulate her on her apparent amendment. “ Ah ! Sir,” she said, sorrowfully, “ I shall never be well again, I fear.” “ Then you must consider, my good Martha,” I replied, “ how you may best serve and please God in sickness. Do you think any thing is better than to serve and please God ? ” “ No, Sir,” she answered ; “ *that* is the best thing, without doubt.” “ Then,” I said, “ in whatever situation any person may be, as they cannot do any thing better than what is best, they must endeavour to serve and please God ; and, I suppose, it may be done in all situations, whether we are rich or poor, young or old, healthy or sick. Are there not different duties for all these different conditions ? ”

She hesitated a little ; so I inquired whether she thought that any persons in the world were under no necessity of trying to serve and please God. “ No,” she said ; “ it must be equally necessary for all.” “ And how is God served and pleased ? ” I asked ; “ is it not by the performance of duties ? ” She answered,

that she knew of no other way of doing it. "Then," I said, "there must be duties for all of all conditions." She allowed it. "A wise person, then," I continued, "that is, one who wishes to do what is best—namely, to serve and please God,—will not think so much about the condition in which he may happen to be, as about the duties which he may have to perform in that condition." This she allowed also. "And," I proceeded, "if the condition be a good one, the thinking about the duties of it, and the wishing to perform them, will be very likely to keep a man out of harm's way, will it not? The rich man, for instance, if he thinks of his duties, and wishes to perform them, is not likely to be a miser or a spendthrift; is he?" "No," she answered; "he will do all the good that he can with his riches." "Very true," I said; "and if the condition be a bad one, as worldly people would call it, what will be the effect, in that case, of thinking of the duties, and wishing to perform them? Will it not be to lessen the troubles of the condition, or to make us feel them less?"

She hesitated again; so I asked her whether Mrs. Clayton was not very old, and very poor, and quite a cripple, and at times very much afflicted with pain? It was true, she answered. "But instead of giving way to these infirmities and afflictions, she has found something to do which is suitable to her condition; has she not?" I inquired. "Yes, Sir," she replied; "she has set up a school, which brings her in something to pay her rent; and so all that her lodgers pay to her is clear money. Besides, she knits out of school-hours, by which she gets a penny now and then; and her children, and other friends, help her at times." "But all these things," I said, "are very precarious and uncertain; are they not? Scholars may fall off; lodgers may run away in debt; the rheumatism may cramp her fingers; friends may forget her; or they, and her children, may be poor themselves." "It is too true," she answered. "Then," I said, "you always hear her, I suppose, complaining bitterly of such things when they happen, or tormenting herself beforehand with the fear of them?" "No, indeed," she replied; "I should speak falsely if I told you any such thing of her." "Yes, *that* you would," cried out her father and mother both at once; and the father added that the good old lady never complained of any thing, but of her eye-sight preventing her from reading her Bible; of being kept from her church by lameness; and of being forced to trouble her children, who had heavy families to support, and were sometimes put to their shifts how to do it.

I was delighted with this testimony to the excellent character of my aged friend below, who was indeed a model of contentment and resignation. It was to the credit of her poor lodgers too, that they were eager to speak in her praise. For there is an extraor-

dinary jealousy of one another amongst people of that condition; so that it seldom happens that any good can be done to one poor family in distress, without stirring up the ill-will of the neighbourhood against them, and bringing all their faults to light. I got a great deal of information in this way which was useful to me, though not always creditable to those who gave it; and when I told them so, they excused themselves by saying, that it was a pity I should be imposed upon, as they supposed I frequently was; but they did not seem to be aware that I had many reasons, and good ones too, for conferring favours upon persons who did not deserve them.

These reflections having occupied but a moment, I resumed the thread of our discourse, and said, "If this be so, then the good old Mrs. Clayton is an admirable proof of what I mentioned—that evils are lightened, or less felt, when the afflicted person thinks continually, or chiefly, of the duties which are capable of being performed, and of which, therefore, God will require the performance. Her evils, indeed, seem to affect her, not as they regard herself, but as they regard others; namely, her sons, whom she is sorry to load with an additional burden; and God, whom she regrets that she cannot enough serve, by reading his holy word, or by worshipping him in his own holy temple. As to herself personally, you tell me, and I know it very well, she never complains, either in expectation of suffering, or under the pressure of it. I do not mean that she never sheds a tear, or fetches a sigh, or utters a groan, when her pains are extreme, as I have often seen them. She does this, perhaps, though very rarely, but always without any appearance even of murmuring; and all the time her constant language is, 'God's will, not mine be done;' and if you pity her, she says, 'Affliction does not spring from the dust, nor trouble from the ground; it is God who sends it, and God is merciful as well as wise; what he sends, therefore, must be for my good.' And a few fine sentences of St. Paul, St. James, and St. Peter, are often in her mouth; namely, 'Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Take the Prophets for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. For a season, if need be, we are in heaviness, that the trial of our faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, when we shall receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.' With these, and such like passages of Scripture, does the good old lady comfort herself every day; and she remembers Job, and David, and above all, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who was made perfect by suf-

ferings, and of whom I read to you, Martha, in the exhortation, that he went not up to joy, but first he suffered pain, and that he entered not into his glory before he was crucified."

"It is very true, Sir," replied Martha, "what you say of Mrs. Clayton; and I have wondered ever since I knew her, how she could make herself half so patient as she is; and I have often heard her talk of those things out of the Bible which you have just mentioned to us, Sir; ay, and a great many more of the same sort; but I do not understand them, or feel them, Sir, as she seems to do. A short time ago, when my troubles began, and before I was confined up here, (since which I never have seen her, for the poor creature cannot get up these stairs, or I am sure she would,) she showed me, Sir, one of those very sentences in the Bible, and I was ashamed to tell her that I did not know what it meant, or to ask her to explain it to me; I might have profited by it now."

"You might, indeed," I said; "but what is it that makes the difference between you and Mrs. Clayton in this respect? You have probably been taught in your youth quite as much as she was; but she has been a constant reader of her Bible ever since, and in the constant habit of going to church. By doing so she has heard a vast number of passages explained; and by comparing passage with passage in the course of her own reading, she has been able to explain many passages for herself. You, my poor Martha, have neglected, I fear, both your Bible and your church; and now we all of us see, and you yourself feel the lamentable consequences of it. Tribulation, instead of working patience, as the apostle tells us that it should do, and as God himself intends, and as the good Mrs. Clayton finds in herself, works in *you*, or rather I should say, (for you seem to be much improved) *did* work, immoderate, unavailing sorrow, nay, clamorous discontent, and rash murmuring against Providence. Your conduct was such as if you said to God, My will, not thine, be done; God's ways are unequal, mine are equal."

I was going on to place her behaviour in a still stronger light, and to affect her as deeply as I could, now that it was possible to do so without danger to her health, but she was deeply affected already, and interposed with tears in her eyes, and cried out, "Oh! Sir, I beseech you do not lay those things to my charge any more; I shall never be guilty of them again: I thought myself very wise, but I was a poor ignorant creature after all. However, I will now begin to study my Bible, as Mrs. Clayton has done; and if ever I should have strength enough to go to church, I will do it. I will think, too, whether I cannot do something for my maintenance, even in this pitiful state that I am in, and likely to be. When I was a girl, I was taught to work lace, and, perhaps, if I set about it, I may succeed in that way yet; it will require nothing but my

fingers, you know, Sir; and the doctors tell me, that I shall never be able to move about much, or be fit for hard work again. If God should bless this endeavour, Sir, perhaps I may be as patient and contented as Mrs. Clayton at last."

The picture which poor Martha drew of her own probable future circumstances cheered her spirits wonderfully, and her countenance brightened up with the very imagination of what might come. I encouraged this right disposition, and commended her as much as seemed fit, and then I added, "God will certainly bless such an endeavour, either by causing it to prosper in the way that you yourself may wish, or at all events by looking upon you with his favour. So never mind, Martha, even if your endeavour should fail in procuring you a maintenance; it will not fail, depend upon it, in procuring you the favour of God, and I hope that you will now understand and believe this. Every body seems to understand and believe that God blesses them when their works prosper; but very few, I fear, understand and believe that God may still be blessing them when their works fail; their faith is not sufficient for it. This is the difficult thing; and this is what you must try to bring yourself to, under the heaviest disappointments. You must always be ready to say from your heart, 'My hope hath been in thee, O Lord; I have said thou art my God.' Nothing should shake such a trust and confidence. Remember how Job behaved when he was in the lowest depths of misery; bereaved of all his children, riches, and glory; from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot covered and tormented with painful and loathsome sores; lying prostrate on the hearth, and his venerable hoary hair and beard defiled with ashes. Could any thing be worse than this Martha?"

"Nothing, Sir," she answered decisively; "my misfortunes are a trifle to *his*; I see it now, and I am ashamed to have troubled my old parents, and disgraced myself, and distrusted God, as I have done." An energy, new and unknown to her before, seemed now to actuate her whole mind and frame; and, for an instant or two, whilst in her fancy she was following its impulse, she forgot the subject of our conversation, and was silent. I too remained silent, observing her emotion, and considering how to take advantage of it: at length, recollecting herself, she said, "But what did Job do, Sir? you did not tell me *that*." "No," I replied; "but I will tell you now. First he said, 'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!' And afterwards, whilst he was sitting in the ashes, and (so great and astonishing was his misery!) scraping himself with a potsherd, his wife advised him to curse God, and die." "Oh, the wicked woman," cried Martha, not able to restrain herself, and interrupting the story to express her indignation; "she was not worthy of her

husband, Sir; and, I am sure, he would not listen to her in the least." "No, indeed," I said; "his answer to her was, 'thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?'" "Very true, Sir," said Martha; "and how did she know but that this evil might be good too?"

This question delighted me exceedingly, it proved that my poor patient was advancing with great and rapid steps towards the virtues, of which a little while ago she seemed so totally destitute. My answer was, that if Job's wife could have persuaded herself of this certain truth, that all which comes from God is good, she would have acted otherwise, and her name would not have been so detested throughout all ages as it has been. "However, Job went further than what I have yet told you; for when he appeared to be in the very lowest extremity of affliction, he said to his friends who were reasoning with him about the dealings of God, 'though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'" "To be sure, Sir," exclaimed Martha, "*that* was going to the very utmost; but he knew, I suppose, that there would be another world after this; for else his trust would have been but a broken reed after all. If death made an end of him, Sir, what mattered it whether he trusted in God, or not? His trust might bear him up the better whilst he lived, but he would be the more wofully disappointed afterwards, if he had a single moment given him to know the disappointment."

"Very well, Martha," I said, "there is a great deal of sense in what you mention; but suppose Job not to have known positively whether there would be another world, or not; suppose him to know no more than what he could make out by his own reasonings about it; what will you think then of his faith and trust in God? *We* know, by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that there will certainly be another world after this; and we know, moreover, that all God's dispensations in this world, good or evil as we may call them, are intended to fit us for that other; our faith and trust therefore seem to be scarcely worth any thing at all, whilst his seem to be most wonderful, and almost unaccountable. But he was advanced as far as this persuasion, which was fixed and rivetted in his mind, that, whatever come, God must do right." "It is wonderful indeed," said Martha, with a tone of disappointment; for she had begun, I believe, to aspire to the rivalry of Job himself, but now thought the contest hopeless; "it is very wonderful, Sir, and none of *us* can do any thing like it now." "No," I continued, "we cannot be in the same circumstances. However, it is very likely that Job had reasoned himself upon the whole into the belief of another world to come, in which God would exercise perfect justice, and make up for all the deficiencies and ine-

qualities in this. For amongst many other extraordinary things which he spoke, this was one; 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' "Why, *that* is very clear, Sir," she said. "It seems so, indeed," I rejoined. "And what might the more incline Job to think so, might be the consciousness that all his life he had endeavoured with sincerity to serve and please God; a consciousness which did not deceive him, for God himself bore the same testimony to his uprightness and piety, and declared that there were none like him in the earth. But I will read you the first two chapters of his history out of this pretty Bible of yours, and then you will understand the thing better."

"If you please, Sir," she said: so I read them, and commented upon them as I went along; and afterwards I came back again to the fifth verse of the first chapter, which was most to my present purpose, describing, as it does, so strikingly and so beautifully, Job's tender affection for his children, and pious fear of God. "Now then," I said, when I had done commenting, "could any man try to serve and please God more than this man did?" "No, indeed," she answered. "Yet he suffered," I said, "heavier afflictions than ever befel mortal man before or since. Afflictions therefore are no proof of God's anger, nor are they always necessary to purge away sins or follies. They may be sent to try a man's patience, for the example of others; to bring to light shining virtues which must otherwise have been for ever hidden and lost in darkness; and as the means of exalting the man himself hereafter to a higher state of bliss and glory. At all events, this last will be the result to those who endure their afflictions patiently to the end. According to Mrs. Clayton's text, which you did not understand when she showed it to you, the order of proceeding will be this: tribulation, patience, experience, hope, possession; experience, that is, of your own growing powers of sufferance, of the grace of God supporting you, and of his approbation attending upon your success. Then follows hope, and such a hope as maketh not ashamed by terminating in a disappointment of your reward, but being founded upon a rock is fulfilled in heaven. Do you understand this now?"

"I think I do, Sir," She replied; "and I am sure of one thing, that I can suffer now better than I could. May I please myself, therefore, with supposing, that the grace of God supports me, and that his approbation rests upon me?" "You may, undoubtedly," I said; "and when this is securely established, you may go on from thence to hope; to a hope that will not deceive you: and indeed God well deserves your thanks for putting you into this train of causes, which begins with tribulation, and ends with unspeakable

ble glory. If you had any hope before, Martha, it was such a one as was most likely to make you ashamed, for it was founded on a false notion of your own goodness; on the notion that you had never injured your fellow-creatures, or offended God. Alas! alas! Martha, we are all sinners. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' This is no opinion of mine, it is the unerring judgment of an inspired apostle. I told you at once, that I had no doubt your offences were more in number than the hairs of your head; and I used that language, because I knew the declarations of Scripture, and the general frailty of human nature. I knew nothing myself of your particular failings, which God might wish to correct by affliction, at the same time that he wished to try your patience, as he did the patience of Job. But some of your failings have now become evident; you are aware of them yourself, and you have determined to amend them; I mean your neglect of public worship, and of the study of the holy Scriptures. I hope you will discover every other failing, and by the divine help amend them likewise; and then affliction will do its proper work. You have not been a wicked woman, perhaps, as you say; but it would have been better not to have said it, and rather to have humbled yourself under God's mighty hand. If he should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who could abide it? Not I, Martha; no, nor *you*; we have done much amiss—we have done much that should have been left undone—and it is very certain that we have left undone still more which we ought to have done. But I have had a great advantage over *you*, Martha: I knew that I was sick, and that I wanted the help of the heavenly Physician of souls, and so I fled to him to obtain that help. You fancied yourself sound and whole, and therefore you thought not of him; but God has graciously roused you from your slumber of false security by adversity, trouble, and sickness; his providence has conducted *me* to you, without any summons from yourself; and I am happy in thinking that what I have said to you has already been blessed to your soul's health. I shall have much more to say, and I trust you will gladly listen to it."

Poor Martha was bathed in tears, and could make no answer to this grave address; but both her parents assured me, that she would be most ready to fulfil all my wishes. At this moment Mrs. Warton came in very opportunely, and told me that I was wanted at a neighbouring cottage, where I had left her on my road to Martha's; so I hurried away, just recommending to her to talk over some plan for lace-working, or any other sedentary occupation, which might suit the circumstances of the sick woman. She did so, and the sequel was, that Martha, although she never became a skilful workwoman, yet by Mrs. Warton's means was so generally encouraged, that she soon maintained herself and assisted

her parents, and released the parish from the burden which she had brought upon it. And this she continued to do for many years, except in times of peculiar difficulty, when provisions were very dear ; or when Mrs. Warton could find no purchasers for her lace ; or when she herself was helpless with disease.

But at present, and for some time, she was too ill to do any thing ; and I found her in bed more often than sitting up. This was the case at my next visit ; she was in bed, and very low and depressed in spirits : her mother only was with her. Thinking that she was now in a proper temper for prayer, and that she might be raised and cheered a little by it, I proposed it at once ; and I went through several of the psalms, according to my usual method, selecting such as were adapted to a person in distress, and of a desponding mind. Then I read one of the prayers in the visitation-service, the Lord's prayer, and the benediction at the end. This being finished, I rose from my knees, and sat down by the bed-side ; observing that she looked much more comfortable, and that possibly she would now be able to talk with me. As yet she had said nothing, except to tell me how ill she was.

I began, therefore, with asking her if she understood the beautiful passages, which I had read to her ; and whether she felt them as being suited to her own case. " Yes, Sir," she answered, " I understood them very well, and they seemed to be made on purpose for me." I asked her next, whether she remarked, and applied to herself as a pattern, the great warmth and earnestness with which David, in the 86th Psalm more especially, puts up his prayers to his God. " I did, Sir," she replied ; " but it is all too high for *me*." " Why," I said, " you may truly consider yourself as being poor and in misery, like David ; may you not ?" " Yes, indeed, Sir," she answered ; " *that* I may ; if it be poor, to have been robbed of every thing ; and if it be misery, to be afflicted with such diseases as I have." " Undoubtedly it is," I said ; " but why then are you not as desirous as David was, to be released from these evils, and in the same way ; namely, to ask help incessantly and fervently of *Him* who alone is able to give it effectually ?" She was silent ; so I continued, " Hear again how pressing and importunate David is, as if he would take no denial of his petitions, ' Bow down thine ear, O Lord, and hear me ; preserve thou my soul ; my God, save thy servant ; be merciful unto me, O Lord ; comfort the soul of thy servant ; give ear, Lord, unto my prayer, and ponder the voice of my humble desires ; O turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me ; give thy strength unto thy servant, and show some token upon me for good.' All this is in one single psalm, and it is very instructive to *us*. But observe also what a thorough conviction he has of God's mercy, and what a thorough trust and confidence he reposes in it :

‘Thou, Lord, art good and gracious, and of great mercy unto all them that call upon thee ; thou, O Lord God, art full of compassion and mercy, long suffering, plenteous in goodness and truth ; in thee do I put my trust ; to thee do I lift up my soul : I will call daily upon thee ; I will thank thee, O Lord, my God, with all my heart ; I will praise thy name for evermore.’—Then again observe, what is perhaps most beautiful and most affecting of all, how he seems to imply that distress alone is a sufficient claim upon the gracious Being to whom he addresses himself in prayer ; for he says, ‘Hear me, O Lord ; for I am poor and in misery ; in the time of my trouble I will call upon thee.’ He does indeed, in the 2d verse, call himself holy ; but it is not in the common sense of the word, as if he were free from all sin, and holy as God is holy, and as we Christians are commanded to strive to be ; although God might have had wise reasons for afflicting him, even if he had been holy in that sense ; but he means that he is a man in covenant with God, and consecrated to his service, and acknowledging *Him* alone to be the true God in opposition to all the false gods of the heathens ; in the same manner as every Christian may be considered to be something holy, because he is dedicated to God in his baptism, and adopted into his family through Jesus Christ. In the other sense it would have been very presumptuous and arrogant in him to have said, ‘I am holy,’ and on such a ground to challenge God’s mercy ; and far be it from any of *us* to do so. But we may say very properly, and with true piety and humility, ‘Hear us, and be merciful unto us, O Lord, for we are thy servants, and reconciled to thee by thy son ; and thou hast promised to help all who see and feel their own misery, whether spiritual or temporal ; and who look to thee alone for succour.” This would be right language ; but then it should always be accompanied, in the case of temporal afflictions, with our Saviour’s entire submission—‘Thy will, not mine, be done ;’ and at all events the effect of the affliction should be to make us join with David in praying, as in the 11th verse, ‘Teach me thy way, O Lord ; O knit my heart unto thee, that I may fear thy name, and walk in thy truth.’ This is an excellent psalm for you to study by yourself, Martha, when I am gone ; and when you come to the 13th verse, let it bring to your mind, that God has delivered *your* soul, as well as David’s, from the nethermost hell. Had you any expectation of being alive now ?” “No, indeed, Sir,” she answered ; “I thought myself a dead woman ; and I thought, besides, that it would be a happy release for me.” “Ah! Martha, Martha,” I said solemnly, “and where would have been your soul, if you had gone into God’s presence with impatient speeches upon your lips, and resistance to his will in your heart? where would have been your soul ?” She shuddered, and was speechless ; and presently I

saw a tear stealing out of her eye, which her mother also watched, and soon afterwards wiped away. I continued : " Cry out then with David, ' I will thank thee, O Lord, my God, with my whole heart ; I will praise thy name for evermore ; for great is thy mercy towards me ; and thou hast delivered my soul from the nethermost hell.' Next ask yourself why God has thus delivered you ; and when you have found the reason, cry out again, ' O knit my heart unto thee, and teach me thy way, O Lord ; and I will fear thy name, and walk in thy truth.' "

Here I paused, to see whether she would say any thing to indicate her feelings ; and at length she did, to my sorrow, and proved that as to the great question of unworthiness, the battle was yet to be fought. " This is very good advice, Sir, which you give me," was her observation ; " but I hope you do not put me on the same level with David, who, you know, Sir, was a great sinner." Ah ! I thought with myself, here is the old leaven still at work, and leavening the whole mass ! The pride of self-righteousness corrupts not the philosopher alone, but even the unlearned peasant ; to every rank the gospel is foolishness ! Poor Martha had imbibed new notions with respect to God, and her own sufferings. God was wise and good ; so the sufferings might be sent to try her—to call forth dormant excellencies—to procure her a greater reward hereafter. So far she was now willing to admit ; but she could not yet admit, that these sufferings were deserved corrections for her improvement in righteousness.

" No, Martha," I answered, " I do not put you on the same level with David ; but I *do* put you on a level with sinners ; as I told you in our last conversation, we are all sinners. You have been a modest and chaste young woman ; and therefore you were not like David, who, although a man after God's own heart, yet, in a moment of great temptation, broke the seventh commandment, and then being plunged into wickedness, he went deeper and deeper, and broke the sixth also. But do you think that such sinners alone need correction, and to be brought by it to fear God's name, to learn his ways, and to walk in his truth ? Who fears God's name enough ? Who has learnt enough of God's ways ? Who walks enough, daily and hourly, in God's truth ? Scripture says, ' Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, and with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength ;' but who does this ? Certainly not any one who neglects to worship him, and to study his holy word, and who murmurs at his dispensation." Thus I reproved her with somewhat of severity ; but suddenly relenting a little, I retracted the last accusation, and said more mildly, " But you have wisely and piously ceased to murmur, my poor Martha ; and therefore you have so far become what God wishes you to be. Yet true wisdom and piety require still more of you."

At first she was sinking under my anger, as she perhaps interpreted my tone and manner ; but this little addition of praise soon raised her again, and she said with a good deal of confidence, " Yes, Sir, and I have promised and determined to read my Bible, now that I have leisure to do it, and to go to church when I am able. When I lived with Mrs. Bryan, I could not do either ; and so my not doing them was no sin, Sir." " But tell me, Martha," I inquired, " did God force you to live with Mrs. Bryan ?" " I cannot say *that*, Sir," she answered reluctantly. " Why did you go to live with that lady ?" I inquired again. " Because she replied, " the place was more respectable, and I got greater wages." Once more I inquired, " Had you more time to yourself in your former place ?" " Yes," she answered, " a great deal." " So that *then* perhaps you read your Bible at home," I said, " and went to church now and then besides ?" " Yes, Sir," she replied, " I went to church very often ; for it was a rule that all the servants should go once on Sundays, and some twice, in their turns ; and my then mistress would have no company on the Sabbath, Sir, nor any thing but the plainest dinner in the world, that her servants might have as little to do as possible ; and so we found time for reading the Bible, Sir." " Well, Martha," I said, " these were great advantages ; but how did she manage about her coachman ? for I think you must be speaking of the good Mrs. Bolton, who kept a carriage, I recollect ?" " Yes, Sir," she answered, " *that* was my former lady ; and she never used her carriage on a Sunday except to go to church ; and she always contrived to go early, Sir, that the coachman might have time to put up his horses, and go to church too, without being late." " *That* was very considerate, and very kind of her," I said ; " and I will tell you, Martha, what this good lady once mentioned to me about her carriage ; that the first use of it was to take her to church ; and the second, to do acts of charity and neighbourly kindness. And very often has she carried me in it, to visit the sick, and sent me home in it, after dining with her." " Yes, Sir," replied Martha ; " that was just like her." " But did not she sometimes come to church," I asked, " in a chair, Martha ?" " Yes, Sir," she answered, " when the horses had had extraordinary work the day before ; or when they might have required cleaning, on account of the roads, after taking her to church, so as to make it difficult, or impossible, for the coachman to be there ; then she always used a sedan. She kept one on purpose, as you know very well, Sir." " I do indeed," I said ; " and I believe I shall be right in supposing that she had family prayers very often." " You would, Sir," she replied, " they were seldom missed, and she read them herself, and very well too." " And what situation had you in Mrs. Bolton's household, Martha ?" I asked. " I was under-housemaid, Sir,"

she answered. "And what situation had you with Mrs. Bryan?" I asked again; and she replied, that she was upper-housemaid. "So then," I said, "you got a higher place, and better wages." "Yes, Sir," she answered; "*that* was the only reason for my changing." "But do not you recollect, Martha," I said, "whilst you lived in the service of the late Mrs. Bolton, having read sometimes in your own Bible (which I dare say she gave you,) and having heard sometimes at church, such a sentence as this: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all these things shall be added unto you;' all the necessities of life, and all the conveniencies too, the higher places and the better wages, if God see fit?" "Why, yes, Sir," replied Martha, a little conscience-struck, "it is very true; I remember that verse as well as any other." "But you did not understand it then, I suppose, or perhaps," I said, "you did not believe it? For you sought the higher place and the better wages, instead of the kingdom and the righteousness of God; and you gave up these for the others, doing thus the very contrary to that which Jesus Christ himself warned you to do." Poor Martha was now sore beset, and became quite dumb; but her mother interposed, as on former occasions, and said, "Yes, Sir, it was very unlucky; but my daughter did not know that Mrs. Bryan would keep her from church, till she went to live with her." "Who first heard of the place being vacant?" I inquired. "It was *me*, Sir," said the mother. "And did you ask any body," I inquired again, "about the habits of the family? By her silence she confessed that she had not. "But you knew yourself, I suppose, did you not, that they kept very late hours?" "I cannot deny it," she answered; "all the parish knew it." "But when people keep late hours," I said, "is it likely that they, or their servants, will be able to go at all to the morning-church, if to the other?" The old woman being now dumb in her turn, Martha resumed her part, and said, "No, Sir, and so I found it to my cost; for mid-day was always gone by, before I had put my mistress's room in order, after she quitted it to go down to breakfast. Then the lateness of our dinner, Sir, made it quite impossible for the servants to attend church in the afternoon; and so we went on, Sir, to the end of the chapter, without being able to help ourselves at all." "Yes," I said, "so you went on without a God in the world; but whether you were able to help yourselves, or not, will appear presently. Was your mistress, do you think, the only person to blame for this heathenish, irreligious life?" "We laid it all upon *her*, Sir," she answered; "for servants, you know, Sir, have no right to contradict their superiors, and I have always made it a point to obey mine." "But, Martha," I said, "if servants should not contradict or disobey their superiors, they may leave them, I suppose; may they

not?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "*that* is true, no doubt." "And ought they not to leave them," I inquired, "when obedience is sinful?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "but you forget how hard it is for poor servants to get places, and Mrs. Bryan was a very indulgent mistress, and never scolded any of us, and we had plenty to eat and drink. Such places are not to be got every day, Sir." "So then," I said, "it never once came into your head, Martha, that it was your duty to look out for another place, in which it might be possible for you to serve and worship God?" She hesitated; so I pressed her to tell me the truth for her own sake, as, in fact, it concerned herself only, and *me* not at all. Being thus urged, she was compelled to allow, that she had never thought of leaving Mrs. Bryan, come what might; and beginning now, I suppose, to see that she was not so blameless, as she fancied herself to be, she burst into tears, and wept aloud.

To comfort her, and at the same time to strengthen the other principles, which I hoped that I had infused into her in my former conversations, I said tenderly, but solemnly, "Ah! my poor Martha, God loved your soul better than you loved it yourself. If you ever thought of God at all, you thought to reconcile the love of God and the love of the world together, which cannot be. You were going on fast in the high broad way to destruction; but he graciously interfered to save you. I see his hand now as clearly as if I had seen it with my eyes. No doubt he might have rescued you from your danger by a hundred other ways; but he chose this, which I am sure therefore was the wisest and the best: and what is remarkable about it is, that he made your own imprudence the very instrument of conveying his mercy to you; so that all the misery might appear to be of your own making, and all the mercy *his*. What is the result then, but that, with the Psalmist, you should praise him for ever more, and exclaim, 'O knit my heart unto thee, that I may learn thy ways, and walk in thy truth.'"

Martha still continued to weep; but I doubted whether her tears sprung from the sense of her own unworthiness, or from the disappointment which she felt in being brought down from the high towers of goodness which she wished to appear to occupy. They looked too much like the latter; and I was struck with the uncommon difficulty of producing the former, and might have been tempted to end the conversation here: but I was induced, partly by curiosity, and partly by the hope of making further advances, to ask her, how her acquaintance began with the man who had so basely betrayed her; "for as to *his* conduct," I said, "there can be no doubt, Martha, that it has been base in the extreme, however useful it may be to *you* in the end."

She replied immediately, that she should be glad to tell me all about it; and she wiped off her tears, and seemed to be preparing

for a long story. "And you must know, Sir," she said, "that I was not so content without public worship, as you may suppose me to have been; and I talked about it sometimes to another young woman, who felt as I did. So we determined to go one Sunday evening to Sion Chapel, which you know, Sir, is just beyond the parish, after my mistress was gone out to dinner a great way off, and I had time to put her room to rights before the service began. I had heard too, Sir, that there was to be a great preacher there that evening; so I was the more eager to take the opportunity." "Ay," I said, you had itching ears, Martha; but God loves the doers, and not the hearers. But did you tell Mrs. Bryan that you intended to go to a Meeting-house?" "No, Sir," she answered, "I did not; for I knew that my mistress would not be offended; for she had often told us, that we might go to worship where we liked best, and that she thought it an improper thing to meddle with any person's persuasions in religion." "It was being very tender to weak consciences," I said "but go on with your history." "Upon this, Sir, we went," continued Martha; "and all was very fine, and very good; but, ah! Sir, there I met that base man for the first time; and oh! what a wicked hypocrite he was, Sir, to go to a place of worship, where they pretended to greater strictness in all their doings; and to pass himself off for the best of them all; listening, Sir, and praying, and singing psalms, in such a manner as to deceive every body." "But how came you to observe this so particularly?" I inquired. "Why, Sir," she answered, "he sat next to me; and we had made the first steps to an acquaintance already, by his helping me in through the crowd, and placing me and my friend in comfortable sittings near the minister. But the business might have ended here, Sir, if he had not attended upon us home, and made me promise to meet him at the same place on the following Sunday. At church, Sir, this could never have happened to me," "Why not, Martha?" I asked. "Because," she said, "I should not have been bold enough to have walked home with a strange man by day-light. And So, Sir, the second night he had fresh opportunities of talking to me, and I was deceived worse than before, and thought him quite a miracle of goodness. He was a little rough, Sir, outwardly; but his heart seemed the tenderest and gentlest that could be desired, and he had deceived many besides *me* by the same pretences. He attended upon me home again, and afterwards he came to visit me, which was a very easy matter in such a family as ours. So I married him, too hastily, God knows; and, suspecting nothing, I put all my savings into his hands. Then his true character soon showed itself in idleness, and drunkenness, and other worse things; and when I pressed him to take up some business, he rated at me, and sometimes beat me; and at last he fairly confessed that he had another wife living, and so he

deserted me thus, Sir. Am I wrong in calling him a villain—a base, treacherous villain?”

Her countenance was lit up again with a revengeful feeling against the author of so many injuries; but suddenly, thinking herself, I suppose, liable to a rebuke, she caught hold of her mother's distinction, and added, in a different tone, “Remember, Sir, I complain only of *him*; I do not murmur against God.” “But you must be careful, very careful, Martha,” I said, “how you indulge in these violent complaints against *him*; for such complaints, and murmurs against God, border too nearly upon each other. Did you ever hear any body, in cold, rainy weather, exclaim that it was odious and execrable?” “Yes, I have, Sir,” she replied, “very often; I have heard my mistress do so and I thought that she spoke too strongly, and that it was not proper language.” “You thought very rightly, Martha,” I said; “but tell me why you thought so.” “Because Sir, you know,” she answered, “it is God who makes the weather to be what it is; and I wondered my mistress did not see that calling the weather by those ugly names was very like calling God so.” “It is very true, Martha,” I said; “you have only to apply this to your own case, and it will soon soften down both your language and your feelings too, when you are forced to speak or think of your betrayer. It is impossible not to believe him to be all that you call him: but still, bad as he may be, he was an instrument in God's hands for your correction and trial; and therefore you must be the more cautious, lest any thing which you might say immediately against *him*, should reach ultimately to God. No; he is gone: and happy it is for you that he has left you. Think about him no longer; or if you do, pray to God, in the true Christian spirit, to forgive him, and do *you* forgive him yourself.” “I cannot do it,” she exclaimed instantly, and with great agitation; “no, Sir, I cannot do it: I must be a stock or a stone not to hate the wretch. You do not know all, Sir, or you would enter more into my feelings.” “This is a very important subject, Martha,” I said; “of the very utmost consequence to you, both here and hereafter; but neither have I the time, or are you well enough, after so much other conversation, to begin a new one now; we must, therefore, put it off to a future opportunity. One thing, however, I will leave you to reflect upon: you ask God, in the Lord's prayer, to forgive *you your* trespasses against himself, only on the condition that *you* forgive others *their* trespasses against *you*; and Jesus Christ said to us all, ‘when ye pray, forgive, that ye may be forgiven.’ Either, therefore, we must be sure that there is nothing about us which requires forgiveness, or we condemn ourselves, if we do not forgive others. Think of this, my good Martha, till I see you again.” Thus I left her.

School being over, I made a short visit, as I passed through the

chamber, to old Mrs. Clayton within her screen. She was quite alone, but by no means well, and she complained particularly of her head. "Ay," I said, "my good old lady, there is nothing but labour and sorrow at your great age: so we find it by experience, so Scripture tells us that it is, so God has ordained it for wise and merciful reasons." "Yes, Sir," she replied; "if it were not so, we might love this world too much, instead of being weaned from it, when we must leave it so soon." "You are very right," I said; "and, as for yourself, you are quite prepared, I think, to live or die, as God may please to dispose of you."—"That is it, Sir," she answered; "as God may please to dispose of me."

"Nothing can be better than *that*. Whether he take me to-morrow, I trust in Christ for his favour; or whether it be his will that my pilgrimage should last another year, I am content. In that case, I shall have much suffering, I know; but I can bear it by *his* strength, if not by my own." With *your* sentiments, you may indeed," I said; "and remember this, that crowns are won by sufferings; not earthly crowns, but crowns that never perish or fade; and more glorious crowns, the longer and the more patiently we endure those sufferings." "Yes, Sir," she replied; *that* is the joy which is set before me, and my eyes are always fixed upon it: it shines in my weary path, and is a bright lantern to my feet, and keeps me from stumbling with age and pain. I seek a better country, Sir, with humility, but with hope; and, because *he* has promised who is able to perform; *he* whose promises are all yea and amen in his Son Jesus; I rest assured that my hope will not end in shame."

Thus did this aged Christian express her firm faith and pious thoughts; and worthy are those thoughts to be recorded in letters of gold, or rather in some imperishable material, for a pattern to generations. I was myself both affected and edified by them; and for a minute or two I was lost in the meditation which they occasioned, whilst she was expecting me to speak. But I could speak nothing more to the purpose; she had said every thing in a brief compass. At length, however, being aware of her allusion to her favourite text in the end of her sentence, by the association of ideas I recollected poor Martha; and immediately I inquired of Mrs. Clayton, if she herself had ever received any great injury, in the course of her long life, from one of her fellow-creatures. "Yes, Sir," she answered, "from more than one; and very great injuries, indeed." "And what is your wish," I inquired again, "at this present moment, with respect to those your enemies?" "That I may meet them in heaven, Sir, to be sure," she exclaimed, and with as much animation as if she had all the spirit and fervour of youth about her; "what else would you have me wish, Sir?"—

“You could not wish them any thing better,” I said, “than that they may go where you go; but did they deserve such a wish at your hands?” “Alack-a-day, Sir,” she replied, “we be all sinners together, and can never stand before God, unless he forgive us first; must we not do, therefore, as we would be done by ourselves? And what have *we*, Sir, to forgive one another but the debt of a few paltry pence; whilst we are lost for ever if God do not forgive *us* many thousands of precious talents? Oh, Sir, I have lived this many a year in peace with all my enemies, and now I would die in peace with my God.”

These were melodious sounds to my ears, and she that chanted them was like the poet's swan; they were her own, her last dirge; but, still fresh and instructive, they will ever live in my memory. I seized her withered, tremulous hand with a convulsive grasp, and collecting all my nerves, shaken, as they were, by a scene of such uncommon interest and beauty, I had just strength and presence of mind to exclaim, “You *are* in peace with him;” and then, loosing her hand, and pointing with my fore-finger upwards, I exclaimed again, “and you shall hear him say to you, ‘well done, thou good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joys of thy Lord!’” Before she could speak, I was gone; and I never heard her speak more.

On the following day, being on the road which led to her cottage with Mrs. Warton, I saw one of her grand-children running with all his speed; and he would hardly stop to tell me, as he passed, that he was sent to fetch the doctor to the good old lady; but long before the doctor's arrival, God had taken her to himself.—We hastened as fast as we could, in the hope of being useful. On entering we found the chamber crowded with sons, and daughters, and grand children, and neighbours, who immediately made way for us; some were weeping, and every countenance betokened concern. Even poor Martha Bilson had crawled down stairs to see how a Christian could die; and the tears were running over her cheeks, whilst on her knees (for she was unable to stand) she assisted in supporting the dying saint. For by this time I saw old Mrs. Clayton herself, and her face was truly saint-like. Was it imagination only, or a sweet reality? Every age or care-worn furrow seemed to be smoothed; and many a complacent smile, in quick succession, played about her mouth, and illumined her whole countenance; as if she were saying, “Now I rest from my labours, and my Saviour welcomes my approach.”

So thought Mrs. Warton and myself, as we stood fixed for a minute or two in silent contemplation of the figure before us. She was sitting in her easy-chair, just as usual, and more like one asleep than dying: her eyes were closed; her breath was gentle and soft, and perfectly free. Close to her was her small table, and upon it

her Bible and Prayer-book. The Bible was open, and kept so by her spectacles. You would think that she had been reading a chapter which interested her deeply; that she had taken off her spectacles to mark the page, with the intention of resuming her sacred study; and that she had quietly sunk back in her chair to meditate upon the passage in still abstraction. And perhaps it was so; but the meditation was short here; death silently interposed, and cut her slender thread in twain without disturbing her; and up flew her soul to finish it in heaven. Whilst our attention was arrested by the sight of so much serenity and peace, a breath, somewhat harder and louder than before, announced the very instant of its flight.

I should have read the commendatory prayer, but Mrs. Clayton was dead, before it once occurred to me. When I came to myself, I raised my hat to my eyes; to show my respect for *her* that was gone; to reverence the Almighty, who was thus working beside me; and to put up a short petition for Mrs. Warton and myself, that we might be equally prepared to meet him, when he should work the same work upon *us*. The rest had fallen upon their knees; but they soon rose again, one after the other, when they observed that I had uncovered my face. If any thing were to be said, this was the time for saying it, when every eye was turned towards me, in expectation of what I should do. Thus at least it seemed; so after a short pause I began—

“ You, all of you, I dare say, fear death more or less, because you think that it will be a painful act; and too many have too good reason to fear it, because they know not whither it may take them; they know not, when all shall be over, whether they may repose, like Lazarus, in Abraham’s bosom; or, like Dives, lift up their eyes in hell. Look at the corpse of this aged lady; at the moment of her departure, her features were not distorted or disfigured by the agonies of pain or the consciousness of guilt. Death came upon her without violence; nay, with all the gentleness of a lamb. It was more like falling into a sweet and placid slumber; or like the gathering of ripe fruit, which follows the hand, and requires no force to separate the stalk from the stem. Death may be then without any bodily pain, if God so will; and it is likely that He may so will, if you have passed your days in temperance; and if at the last no guilt, unrepented of, and therefore unforgiven, harass your souls. Keep innocency, therefore, if you can; and *that* will bring you peace at the last; or, if you have broken God’s laws, (and which of you has not?) repent, and return to him betimes, trusting in the merits of his Son, who died to reconcile him to you. Behold her who now sleeps in the Lord Jesus; she was a true believer in him, and a faithful servant; and so she is gone without a struggle, in peace with God, with herself, and with all

mankind. Copy her faith and life; and by the blessing of God, may you copy her death!"

A voice or two answered "Amen;" and then the same word was re-echoed by all. Upon this I quitted the cottage in an instant; and Mrs. Warton, having staid behind me for a few minutes; to give some directions about the corpse to one of Mrs. Clayton's daughters-in-law, she soon rejoined me, and we proceeded together to fulfil the primary objects of our walk. She left them all, as she told me, in tears; my little speech, it seems, having added something to the mournful solemnity of the scene.

§ 2.—MARTHA BILSON, HER MOTHER, &c.

ON the morrow we returned; and when we opened the door, deep silence met us. No shrill voices of infant scholars repeating their tasks; no graver tones of the aged mistress correcting their faults, now greeted our ears. The screen was removed; no blast, but of the archangel's trumpet, could reach the good old dame any more. The forms were vacant; she had finished the last lesson, and shut her books for ever. The great easy-chair was untenanted, though still by the fire-side; she had exchanged it for a coffin and a shroud.

Whilst we were looking about, and feeding our thoughts with empty unsubstantial recollections, the same daughter-in-law came to us from the back chamber, in which she had been watching over the corpse. She stepped gently, and spoke not a word, as if she had feared to wake it; but she beckoned to us with her finger to follow her. We did so; and when she had turned down the end of the sheet, the well-known face presented itself to our view; but all its devout expression was gone with the soul to heaven, its proper abode.

As our chief business was with the living, and not with the dead, we soon quitted this apartment as silently as we entered it, and mounted the staircase to Martha Bilson's. For the first time we found her at her new employment, and entirely alone. She would have stood up, but we prevented her, and seated ourselves at once; and Mrs. Warton inquired if she had caught any cold by going down the day before. "No, Madam," she answered, "none at all; and it was a comforable sight, Madam, to see such a calm and easy death. I have since been often thinking what a different death mine would have been, if I had died in the midst of one of my dreadful fits of pain, when I almost lost my reason and

all power over myself. It would have been terrible to hear my screams, and as terrible to look at me when all was over. But, perhaps, you do not know, Sir," she continued, turning towards me, "how short the whole matter was?" "No," I said, "I have yet had no opportunity of asking." "I will tell you then, Sir," she replied. "My father was going to the shop for a loaf of bread; and, as he passed by, he saw the old lady at her book, as usual; so nothing was the matter with her then. Well, Sir, the shop, you know, is not more than fifty yards from our door, and my father was served immediately; but upon his return she was fallen back in her chair. He gave an alarm, and the chamber was soon full of the neighbours, as you found it, Sir; but I was one of the first to be upon the spot, in spite of my infirmities. However, there was nothing to be done, but to see her die." "And also," I said, "how short and easy a thing dying may be to those, whom it may please God to bless in their last moments. *That* was a comfortable sight, as you have justly mentioned; and it should suggest a useful reflection to us all, and should teach us to be always prepared; that we may not stand in need of a lingering and painful disease to warn and prepare us to make ready for death. Did *you* make this reflection, Martha?"

She hesitated a little, and at length she confessed, that she feared she had not reflected upon it as she ought. "Now," I said, "it must needs have struck every one present, unless they were of very dull intellect indeed, that their own death might be as sudden as Mrs. Clayton's; and then if they reasoned at all, it would strike them next, to consider whether they were prepared for such an end; and if their conscience decided the question against them, the true wisdom would be to set about the preparation without delay. Mrs. Clayton was well prepared, as I myself can testify, having seen and talked with her but the evening before; and therefore it was a gracious mercy on God's part to spare her all the terrors of death's near approach, and to make the time of it so short, and the pain none. With respect to those who are unprepared, the mercy is, though foolish men may call it severity, the real mercy is, to scourge them with the rod of correction; to afflict them; that is, with bodily diseases and other calamities, until they are quite prepared; and, in fact, to withdraw the pains and troubles before the preparation is complete, which the same foolish men perhaps would call mercy, *that* is the real severity; except we go deeper into God's dealings, and believe that he ceases to correct, when he foreknows that correction will be useless. He said indeed himself of the wicked Jews: 'Why should I afflict them any more? They will rebel more and more.' When God foresees this, what can he do? Why, he may either leave those sinners to themselves, using them only as instruments to correct others; or cut them off

at once by a sudden stroke; which might seem to *us* to be the more merciful judgment of the two; because, the shorter their life, the less will be the number of their sins.

“I have said all this, Martha, to open your mind upon the subject of God’s dealings with yourself. If you understand me, you will see, that the continuance of your afflictions is a proof that God has not yet done with you; that he has not cast *you* off, as he does those whom he suddenly destroys, or others, whom he permits to appear to be prosperous. It should rather, therefore, be matter for joy to you, that you continue to be thus afflicted; because you will prepare yourself for death better and better, as God intends and expects; and because thereby you will obtain a nobler reward.”

Here poor Martha burst into tears, as she had often done before, and laid down her work; and exclaimed, with sobs intermingled with her words, “Ah! Sir; but then you make me to be a wicked woman! Surely, I am not a wicked woman, Sir; I cannot bear that you should think me a wicked woman. Nor am I, Sir.” She would probably have said a great deal more of the same kind, if her tears and sobs had not denied her all further utterance. In this state Mrs. Warton went to her, and took her by the hand, and endeavoured to sooth her, and said tenderly, “You mistake Dr. Warton’s reasoning, my good Martha; he does not suppose you wicked in the same sense that you abhor the thought of being so; that is, as if you had been guilty of the greatest crimes; he does not think so of you; no—by no means. But still, my dear Martha, he would not conceal from you, to your great harm, that he thinks you unprepared to die. It is not necessary to be guilty of great crimes, Martha to be unprepared to die. There are many smaller sins, and faults, and failings, that might make us very unfit to die, before we have repented of them, and amended them. Yes, Martha, a person may even be supposed to be free from any of these, and yet want a rightness of thinking and feeling, with respect to his Creator and Redeemer, to such a degree, as to make it very dangerous for him to die in that condition. Perhaps it is this of which Dr. Warton wishes you to be aware; and, as it is of infinite consequence to you to be sensible of it, cheer up, my good Martha, and listen to him, whilst he explains his doctrine to you. Indeed, I wish that I were better prepared for death myself.”

This discreet way of talking to her produced the desired effect. Martha wiped her eyes, and composed herself, and thanked Mrs. Warton for her kindness in taking so much trouble to instruct her; and she added, that she was very far from supposing herself perfect, and that she would willingly be improved. Then she looked at *me*, and said, “If you have time now, Sir, to go on speaking to me, you will do me a favour. It is all for my good, I know

very well; you will have nothing but the trouble of it, Sir.” “And the pleasing satisfaction besides, Martha,” I interposed, “if by any thing that I can say I might prepare you better for death.” “Well, Sir,” said Martha, “it is very good of you, I am sure, to consider it in that manner, and I will therefore try to give you all the satisfaction which I can, whilst the real profit will be mine. I am quite ready, Sir, to hear you.”

Thus we were about to begin again, as it appeared, under the best auspices; but I was not too sanguine, because sad experience had already taught me, that what I considered to be an advance had sometimes turned out otherwise, and that even tears, and sobs, and seeming contrition had terminated in no practical good. It struck me now, that it might possibly be advantageous to tell her the last conversation which had passed between Mrs. Clayton and myself; and immediately I did so, and it affected her deeply. But here, as on former occasions, her conduct was ambiguous, and liable to a double interpretation; and I more than suspected, that the tears which she now shed again were not occasioned by the conviction of any sinfulness in herself, in still persisting to cherish a revengeful spirit, but by the vexatious certainty that I should require her to sacrifice it. She saw plainly, that she could not stand well in my favour, or appear to *me* to be fit to die, unless she both renounced that spirit, and repented that she had ever indulged it. But she could not yet bring herself to this; and hence her distress.

When I had given her a short time to collect herself, I said, “Pray, Martha, tell me whether Mrs. Clayton was considered to be a wicked woman.” “No, indeed, Sir,” she answered, “the very contrary; she was considered to be a good woman.” “But,” I said, “you observed, did you not, in what I told you of her, that she called herself a sinner?” “I did, Sir,” she replied; “it was being very humble to do so.” “And is not humble-mindedness,” I said, “a truly Christian virtue; most lovely in itself, most forcibly enjoined in Scripture, and most acceptable to God? Was not Jesus Christ himself a most beautiful and perfect pattern of humility? Take one little story of him, which, no doubt, you well remember. A person called him good; but he said, ‘Why callest thou me, good? There is none good but one; that is, God.’ Did not he blame and condemn all pride, presumption, and arrogance, and all claims and pretences of self-righteousness? You have surely not forgotten his parable of the Pharisee and the Publican; and how he summed it up by telling us, ‘that he who exalteth himself shall be abased; but that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted.’ His divine sermon on the mount he began with a blessing on the poor in spirit—on the humble and lowly—those who thought little of any virtues which they might possess, and

much of their failings. This, therefore, you perceive, Martha, is the true Christian character ; and our aged friend, who rests below, having acquired that character, she was so far a true Christian, and a pattern for *us* to copy after. But do you think that she called herself a sinner out of mere humble-mindedness, without believing herself to be indeed a sinner ? Would not that have been a miserable affectation, which God would see through at once, and reject for vanity, instead of accepting for humility ? No, no, Martha ; she knew herself to be a sinner, and spoke and acted always as a sinner should do ; that is, with a meek and humble spirit."

Here I paused to ascertain, if possible, whether what I had said came home to her understanding and feelings. Her only observation was, that she had never known Mrs. Clayton to commit any sin. I was in despair ; but I asked her, whether she thought Mrs. Clayton would tell a falsehood. "No," she replied, "*that* she would not, I am sure, if she knew the thing to be false." "Then," I said, "as she called herself a sinner, it is plain that she believed she *was* so." This Martha could not deny ; so I continued ; "But *you*, Martha, did not believe her to be a sinner. Now how is this ? From whence comes this difference between you ? Do you think that you knew Mrs. Clayton better than she knew herself ?" "No," she answered, "*that* could not be." "And there is another thing," I said ; "perhaps she meant something different by being a sinner from what you mean by it." "Yes, Sir," she replied ; "that would account for our difference very well." "Let us see then," I said ; "is it not a sin to break one of God's commandments ?" She allowed it. "And they are sinners who do so, are they not ?" She granted it. "And are not all God's commandments to be met with in the Bible ?" This she allowed also. "And was not Mrs. Clayton in the constant habit of hearing the Bible both read and explained at church, and of reading and studying it at home besides ?" She assented. "Then such a person," I said, "must be most likely to know all God's commandments, and consequently whether she had broken any commandment, or not ; that is, whether she were a sinner, or not. Is it not so ?" She could not deny it. "But a person," I continued, "who was less acquainted with the Bible, not hearing it so often at church, nor studying it so regularly at home, might be ignorant of many of God's commandments ; might she not ?"

Here Martha was silent. "And what is worse" I said "she might think herself and others not to be sinners, when they *were* such ; ay, and great sinners, too ; might she not ?" Martha was still silent, and now began to be visibly affected ; so I determined to push the argument home, before the tears and sobs might again prevent me. "Take," I said, "for instance, this commandment ;

‘love your enemies.’ Now the loving our enemies is a thing so contrary to our nature, that we should never find out by ourselves that it is one of God’s commandments. A person, therefore, not reading it in the Bible might never know it; and the same person might hate her enemies, and so be a sinner without being aware of it. However, it was not in this respect that Mrs. Clayton knew or believed herself to be a sinner; for she gave the best proofs that she possibly could give of loving her enemies; she both forgave them herself, and wished that God might forgive them, and bless them too with his greatest blessing, that is, receive them into heaven. Now search your own heart, Martha, and see clearly how you stand in this respect. There is a man who has injured you, and whom, therefore, you consider to be your enemy: in our last conversation you told me decidedly that you could neither forgive him yourself, nor ask God to forgive him; at that time, therefore, you were a breaker of one of God’s commandments, that is, a sinner, and consequently unprepared to die, and therefore needing correction to prepare you for death, if God intended to save your soul. Such you were two days ago, Martha; I ask, what are you now?”

Poor Martha could bear me no longer. The clouds had for some time been gathering, and now at length, when she was called upon so pointedly to answer for her present state, the torrent burst forth and overwhelmed every thing. But Mrs. Warton’s good offices being exercised as before, after a moderate time, tranquillity was again restored. “Poor Martha,” she said, “I pity you much; and I know very well what a pang it must cost you to forgive a man who has injured you so deeply; it is, perhaps, the most difficult thing to do of all things in the world; and, therefore, you must not expect, nor does Dr. Warton expect, that you should be able to do it at once, and in a moment. But do not despair, my good Martha; you have conquered other wrong feelings, and in the end you may conquer this, hard as it is to conquer. I dare say, Martha, you are now convinced that all violent enmity towards any body must be a very wrong feeling; and if so, *that* will be one step to the getting rid of it. But I hope you are able to go another step; that is, to be aware that whilst you give way to this wrong feeling you are a sinner against God; and your particular sin being the want of the spirit of forgiveness, you cannot with any reason ask God to do *that* for *you* which *you* refuse to do for a fellow-creature. Now, my poor friend you may see plainly how the case is, and if you can but take those two first steps, which I hope and trust you can, that is, if you are aware of your error, and confess yourself in consequence to be a sinner, I am sure that God will bless you and help you to do the rest. The conviction and ac-

knowledge of sin will soon make you humble, like *her* who has left us; and, as Dr. Warton has just told you, God loves humility, and in due time will exalt it."

Thus did Mrs. Warton, following the natural impulse of her temper, and very opportunely under the present circumstances, act the part of a Barnabas, infusing the balm of consolation and hope; after I myself (if I might presume to use such a similitude) had tried with the thunder of the Boanerges to alarm and wound her. Martha Bilson stood in need of both, and even both might fail without a superior aid. But at this moment the aspect of things looked fair and encouraging; for, as soon as she recovered the use of her speech, she said mournfully but decidedly, "I *must* be in the wrong, dear Madam, if *you* and the Doctor think so; you would not tell me so only to vex and plague me; besides, the Bible is against me, I fear, and makes no difference between one injury and another, so as to allow me to forgive *this*, and not to forgive *that*." "It is very true, Martha," I interposed, "all injuries of every kind and degree must be forgiven; we must bear no ill will to any body; on the contrary, we must feel benevolently towards all men; for we are all the children of the same parent, and all depend upon the same Saviour and Redeemer. Should not brethren love as brethren, and more especially when they are all bending forwards together towards the same high prize of their Christian calling?" "Ah! Sir," she said, "if all did this, the world would be a delightful place to live in." "Yes," I rejoined, "It would be like heaven itself, where there is no envy, anger, spite, malice, or revenge; nothing but love, peace, and joy for ever. But the love, the peace, and the joy must begin in this world, Martha; the seeds must be sown, and you must feel them growing up in your own breast whilst you are here, and then God will enable you to reap the rich harvest in full perfection hereafter. But where the spirit of hatred and revenge dwells and governs, *there* love, and peace, and holy joy can never enter. There is one revenge, however, a truly sweet and noble one, which you may indulge to the utmost, Martha." "And what is *that*, Sir, pray?" she exclaimed with eagerness. "It is attended with victory, too," I said: "victory over your enemy, as well as over yourself." She was wound up to a high pitch with expectation, and then I continued, "Why, Martha, you may conquer injuries, and melt your enemies, by forgiving them; and still more, by a return of kind actions for evil ones, by blessings for curses, by prayers for imprecations, you may heap coals of fire upon their heads. This would be a glorious revenge, indeed; this the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us; this is what God himself, and all the good angels, will approve and applaud."

Upon hearing this, Martha discovered a little disappointment,

and her eyes fell to the ground; but she was pleased, it seemed, with the picture which I drew, and soon raised them again, and said, "Ah! Sir, it is too true; I must be very different from what I am, if I am to be like this!" And then she added, trembling, "Indeed, I am not so good, I fear, as I wished to think myself; and, perhaps, when I understand my Bible better, I shall find myself worse and worse." "It may be so, Martha," I said; "and it is as well to be prepared for it. But, at all events, you will know what Mrs. Clayton meant, when she called herself a sinner; you will see that God's law is so strict, yet so just, and good, and holy, that you ought to conform to it, whilst you do not; and then your own conscience will pronounce you a sinner. But then the same gospel which brings you to this conviction will show the remedy—namely, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

Upon saying this, which I thought would be the best conclusion of the whole conversation, I rose before she could answer; and Mrs. Warton following my example, we bade her adieu, and having descended the stairs, we hastened away through the solitary room below.

The funeral of Mrs. Clayton was now over—I had performed it myself, which gave great satisfaction to the whole family. Her daughter-in-law, who lived nearest to her, and with whom I was best acquainted, when she next met me, informed me how glad they were to see me at the church-gates to receive the corpse, and thanked me in all their names. It was a mark of respect which I thought they all deserved; but it is a good thing, as a general practice, that the clergyman who has prepared the sick for death should also bury them; the sick, I believe, wish this themselves universally, if the clergyman has been diligent in his attendance; and their relations and friends are always gratified with it. But where there are many funerals, and much other business to be done, it is impossible to lay down a general rule of this kind with any hope of being able to adhere to it. The performance of the funeral ceremony, therefore, by the Rector in person, even when he had attended the sick especially if they were poor people, was considered in this parish to be a mark of distinction to the dead, and was usually acknowledged as such by their surviving family. So it happened in the present case.

Meanwhile, I had seen Martha two or three times, and particularly recommended to her, amongst other parts of the New Testament, to read again and again, the sermon on the mount, which I had mentioned in my last conversation with her. This having been done, I began, on a subsequent occasion, to talk to her about the concluding paragraph of St. Matthew's fifth chapter; and after many other things had been said, she asked me whether the per-

sons who made the Psalms were not pious and holy men? To which question, when I had answered in the affirmative, she told me that she had often observed in the Psalms very strong expressions against the wicked, and every kind of bad wish against enemies; "And why, Sir," she said, "should we of these days pretend to be wiser or better persons than those men were, by wishing good wishes for our enemies in return for their curses, and doing good actions to the wicked in return for their injuries. Besides, Sir, would not this sort of behaviour do a great deal of mischief in the world, and encourage a great many bad practices?—And there is another thing, Sir, which puzzles me: if it was God who put these notions into *their* heads who wrote the Psalms, the notions must be right; and yet they are very different from those we are now talking about, and which were preached by Jesus Christ: which of them, therefore, must I attend to, Sir? I cannot do both."

This was a matter which had often puzzled wiser heads than Martha's; but it was seldom, perhaps, that any person had applied it in the way that she did. Some used it as an argument to prove, that the Old Testament, which abounds with such passages, could not have a divine origin, and so went on to overthrow all revelation; and others, who were disposed to be good Christians, admiring and imitating the humanity and charity of the gospel, were shocked and scandalized at this apparent contradiction between the two parts of the Bible.

"Well, Martha," I said, after a little consideration, "supposing all these passages in the Psalms, and any where else in the Old Testament, to have the meaning which you give to them; yet the very name of the New Testament shows, does it not, that it is later than the Old, and that it is a fresh declaration of God's will?" "It does, to be sure, Sir," she answered. "Which, then," I said, "should you think required our obedience, if we could not obey both, the earlier or the later declaration of God's will?" She saw, no doubt, that the later one was *that* which was to be principally attended to; but she could not bring herself, in a moment, to overturn her own position; so she was extremely reluctant to say any thing. So I asked her if she had ever heard of a man making two wills; and she replied that she had. "And by which of the two," I asked again, "do you suppose, that the man intended his executors to act?" "By the second, Sir, of course," she answered; "for otherwise there would have been no use in making it." "Very well, then, Martha," I said, "as a testament means a will, you may consider the Old and the New Testaments as two wills; and then you will see clearly, that it would be very ridiculous to pretend that you had the liberty of choosing which of the two you would obey; and, in point of fact, to choose

the older one, and neglect the newer one. For all practical purposes, therefore, you have yourself laid down the right rule—namely, that as there would be no use in making the newer one, unless it were to be obeyed in preference to the older one, the newer one accordingly is the will, or Testament, by which we must regulate our conduct.”

Martha did not appear by any means to be satisfied with so hasty an arrival at this unwelcome conclusion ; so I asked her if she knew why men sometimes made a second will. “ Yes, Sir,” she answered ; “ it is because they don’t like the first ; but I cannot think that God would act as a man ; and it is this which puzzles me, if I may be so bold as to say it, Sir.” “ You are much in the right, Martha,” I replied, “ to entertain honourable ideas of God ; but consider, why is it that men sometimes do not like their first wills, and so make a second ? Is it not because they change their minds ?” “ Yes, Sir,” she answered ; “ but then God is not so weak as to change his mind like a man.” “ Then,” I said, “ you do not think, Martha, that men ever change their minds wisely ?” She was staggered a little at this question, and was silent ; so I continued : “ Men change their minds very often capriciously, and without good reason ; and it is impossible for God to be like them in that respect, because he is always both wise and just, which they are not. Again, men change their minds, with good reason, because circumstances change. A will, made at one time, and very fit for that time, might be very unfit for another time ; might it not, Martha ?” “ It may indeed, Sir,” she replied. “ So,” I said, “ it might be very wise, and even necessary, for a man to alter his first will, or make a new one, as often as circumstances should alter ; might it not ?” “ It might,” she answered. “ If a man had six children,” I said, “ and ordered by his will that all his property should be divided amongst them, and the same man had afterwards another child, would not this change of circumstances require a change of his will ?” “ It would, to be sure, Sir,” she replied. “ Or,” I said, “ if his children remained the same in number, but their situations and circumstances, with respect to their father and one another, were entirely changed in the course of time, would not a change of the will be a wise measure ?” She granted that it would.

“ Very well, then,” I said ; “ now tell me whether the circumstances of the world are not very different at different times ?” She supposed it must be so. “ Then it is likely,” I said, “ that the same mode of governing mankind might not always be equally wise. Sometimes they might require one set of rules, sometimes another. Sometimes stricter rules might be proper, sometimes milder. And one nation again might not be capable of being governed by the same rules as another. Accordingly we find, in

point of fact, that different nations are governed by different rules. God has left some still to worship stocks and stones, because they have not yet sense and understanding enough to be capable of any thing better. Others are far advanced beyond these, but not so far as to be capable of being made Christians, which is the highest and most perfect state of all. We hope and trust, however, that all the world will be improved sufficiently by degrees, and so become Christian at last ; and then all the rules, by which they are now governed, will be laid aside, and the last will of God, delivered by Jesus Christ, will be the only will received and obeyed every where. Do you understand this ?”

“ Pretty well, Sir,” she answered. “ Then,” I said, “ you might readily understand also, that the law given to the Jews, being an earlier one, would probably be very inferior to the Christian law, which is the last ; and that there would be many things in it adapted only to such a people under such circumstances. Indeed God himself tell us, that he gave them statutes which were not good ; that is, not good in themselves, although they might be proper for God’s purposes ; and that he allowed them some things, not strictly right as he would have had them for a more improved nation, on account of the hardness of their hearts ; but that at a future period, when men were ripe for it, he would put an end to all these defective laws, and give them one perfect law for ever. In this sermon upon the mount the superior perfection of the Christian law is pointed out to you. It was said by them of old time, ‘Thou shalt not kill;’ but what does our blessed Lord say? ‘Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever calls his brother a fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.’ Again, it was said by them of old time, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery;’ but what does he say in this case? Why, that a man has already committed adultery in his heart, who has looked upon a woman to lust after her. Again, ‘Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; and thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.’ But what does Jesus Christ say to all this? Why, ‘Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.’ Now then, Martha, tell me this: is it not a finer and a nobler thing, and does it not show a more god-like temper, to do good to enemies rather than to do them harm?” She granted it. “But which,” I asked, “is more agreeable to the corrupt, imperfect nature of men in general?” She shook her head, and said, “The latter.” “Then,” I asked again, “must not men be much improved, before they could see the propriety and the excellency of such a law, whether they were able to obey it or not?” She allowed that they must. “You have heard,” I said, “without

doubt, of the savage nations?" She assented. "Well," I said, "the great law of those nations is, to hate their enemies and to take vengeance upon them to the utmost; what do you think, then, that they would say to the Christian law, which bids them love, and bless, and do good to their enemies?" "Why, Sir," she answered, "I should think they would call it very foolish, and would not be persuaded to receive it." "You are very right," I said, "they are not sufficiently cultivated and improved for so pure and holy a law; it would be, as you say, foolishness to them. But then, do you not see, Martha, that we ourselves, if we are unwilling to embrace this law, degrade ourselves to a level with these savages; and this too, when, on the other hand, by embracing it and obeying it, we should resemble our great heavenly Father, who makes his bright sun to shine and his fruitful showers to descend, upon the unthankful and the evil, as well as upon the thankful and the good?"

The argument seemed to touch her, but she was silent; so I resumed immediately. "Nay, Martha," I said, "I cannot understand in what we should differ from the brute beasts themselves, with respect to our quarrels with one another, if we were to prosecute those quarrels in every case to the utmost. Do the brutes ever appear to *you* to forgive any thing?" "No, Sir," she answered, "there is no appearance of it whatever." "Upon receiving any harm," I said, "they immediately return all the mischief which they can; do they not?" She allowed it. "This state of hostility and vengeance is quite natural to them; is it not?" I inquired. She granted that it was. "And," I said, "you have probably seen some beast in its fury bite a stick that was thrust at it, when it was not able to reach the person who thrust the stick; or a stone that was thrown: or what not?" "I have often seen such a thing," she replied. "But did not such an act," I said, "betoken a total want of all common sense and reason, as well as a great, ungovernable fury of passion?" "To be sure it did, Sir," she answered. "However," I said, "these poor brutes do not seem to remember an injury long, do they, speaking of them generally?" "No, Sir," she replied, "except now and then. I have often been surprised to see how soon they are friends again after their quarrels." "Why then, Martha," I said, "in this respect they are superior to revengeful men; they forget, if they do not forgive; and so their forgetfulness restores them to peace with one another, and prevents their utter destruction. But revengeful men find it very difficult to forget, do they not, if they ever forget at all?" "It is too true, Sir," she answered. "So they brood over their injuries," I said, "by day and by night; or, if they sleep, the same injuries haunt them in dreams, and deny them all peace and comfort; there is a cloud for ever on their brows, and rancour in their hearts. Is

this a condition to be coveted, Martha? The condition of a savage, of a brute? Nay, a worse condition, as we have proved, than the condition of a brute; because a brute forgets, and the man, the rational being, remembers as long as he lives. But what say you, Martha, to such a use of reason as this? Do you like this better than to feel the delicious satisfaction of doing such things as God himself does; of being at peace with all mankind, and even with your bitterest enemies; and of having a constant sunshine upon your face, and in your breast? In which of these two states, tell me, Martha, would you most wish to be called out of this world, to meet your Judge, and to reckon with him?"

She was now touched to the quick, and her tears began to flow, and at length she exclaimed, "Oh! Sir, it was very wicked of me, indeed, to give way, as I did, to my passion. I hope God will forgive me for it, and that I shall be able to overget it." This acknowledgment of error, followed by a supplication for pardon, looked well; and she had now applied an epithet to herself, which a little while ago she had deprecated with abhorrence: so to confirm her in her present sentiments, and to quicken her endeavours after a forgiving temper, I reminded her again of God's forbearance and long-suffering; what impieties and blasphemies were committed against him every day, and yet the sinners themselves were not cut down in his wrath, but pitied and spared, that they might come to repentance. "And, no doubt, Martha, you remember," I said, "how your blessed Saviour rebuked his hasty disciples, for wishing to call down fire from heaven, to consume a city which had injured them; and, what is still more striking, how he prayed for those who murdered him; and how he was afterwards imitated in this noble act by St. Stephen the first martyr. These are patterns for *us*; these, the highest, the holiest, the most perfect of beings; not the brutes, the savages, the rudest and most cruel and uncultivated nations, who are little better than brutes. But I had almost forgotten what we set out with: it is time now to tell you, that the passages in the Psalms, which you considered as justifying you in the indulgence of such an unholy and unheavenly spirit, and which we have talked of as if they were to be understood in the plain simple sense, after all not to be so understood, but with a great many limits and qualifications, which will give them a quite different meaning from what *you* suppose. It would be very strange indeed, if this were not so; when the Old Testament no more commands us, or permits us, to hate and persecute our enemies, in general, than the New Testament does. When our Lord mentions, that it was said by *them* of old time, 'hate your enemies,' he does not mean that it was said in Scripture, for there is no such command in any part of Scripture; but he means, that the wicked Jews explained some passages in Scripture in this manner. No, no,

Martha, the same spirit of universal charity is recommended in both the Testaments; and when the great apostle St. Paul in the New was speaking of charity, he could not express his thoughts upon it better, than by taking a passage from the Old. I will show it you, Martha; where is your Bible?"

"It is here, Sir," she answered, "in the drawer of my table, and I should like to know the passage very much?" So she reached the Bible to me, and I was pleased with observing, that it was not dusty as heretofore, but appeared to be in full use. I then resumed, and said, as I turned over the leaves, "the passage which I am looking for is in the Book of Proverbs. Yes, here it is in the twenty-fifth chapter, at the 21st, and 22nd verses. 'If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.' I will put a mark in the place, that you may find it again, when you are by yourself; and now I will turn to the passage of St. Paul, which is in the twelfth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Here it is at the 20th verse, and I will mark this place for you also; but I will read from the 14th verse to the end of the chapter, for it contains much to our purpose." Upon this I began to read, and, as I went along, I commented upon the striking sentiments, and especially on that which says, 'avenge not yourselves; vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.' "You see, Martha," I continued, "God does not consider us to be fit creatures to take vengeance into our own hands. With so many bad passions about us, and with such an undue self-love, we should be too apt to overrate the injury, and to pursue the punishment too far; and then our enemy would be disposed to retaliate upon the same principle, and there would be quarrels, and strifes, and fightings, and wars without end, till this earth was like a den of wild beasts. You know very well, therefore, that if we have been injured ever so much, we are not permitted to take the law into our own hands. Not only does God forbid it, but all civilized nations forbid it too; and so they have courts of justice, and men of great wisdom, authority, and integrity, to decide all disputes between man and man. But I will repay saith the Lord; if human judges should deny you justice, there is one who will not; and to *Him* you may always look with confidence. If, in obedience to his command, you patiently suffer yourself to be trampled upon in this world, he will exalt you so much the higher in the next. 'Say not thou, therefore,' as the same book of Proverbs tells you, in another place, 'say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.'"

Here Martha interrupted me, by desiring me to be so kind as to find the text, and mark it for her, as I had done the others. This

I did, after a short search; it was the 22nd verse of the twentieth chapter; and I told her how glad I was to see her take such an interest in these beautiful texts. "But," I said, "as you seemed, my good Martha, to admire the character of Job so highly, I will mark you a passage also, in which that excellent man declares his sentiments on this subject. It is at the 29th and 30th verses of his thirty-first chapter. He is speaking of the various circumstances under which he might well deserve the anger of God, and he puts this as one; 'if I rejoiced at the destruction of *him* that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him; but I have not done so, neither have I suffered my mouth to sin, by wishing a curse to his soul.' Such a man was Job; and now, in his great afflictions, the remembrance of his benevolent feelings towards an enemy supported his spirits." Poor Martha looked as if she had deprived herself of this consolation; but I proceeded without noticing her uneasiness. "One passage more, perhaps the most beautiful of all, I will mark for you out of the law of Moses. It is here, at the 4th and 5th verses of the twenty-third chapter of Exodus: 'If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again; and if thou see the ass of *him* that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.' What do you think now, Martha? Do not these several passages from Solomon, from Job, from Moses, show you very clearly that the same divine charity is the duty of both the Testaments?"

"Yes, Sir, indeed," she answered, "it seems very clear, as you say; but if I may be so bold, Sir, (I hope no offence,) I will show you what it was which misled me. Since you have been so kind as to visit me, Sir, I have read the Psalm which is in the service for the sick, very often; and I looked for it amongst the other Psalms, to see if there was any thing else in it to comfort me; and so I found, Sir, at the 11th verse, (here it is,) that the maker of the Psalm prays for the destruction of his enemies. Is not this so, Sir?"

Thus she questioned me, whilst she put her prayer-book into my hands, opened at the proper place. "Yes, Martha," I answered, "it seems so, certainly; but shall I tell you what the learned men say of this passage, and of a great many more of the same sort?" "If you will take the trouble, Sir," she replied, "it will be doing me the highest favour." "You know," I said, "very well, I presume, that these Psalms were written at the first in another language, and that they were translated, as it is called, into *our* language?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "I understand *that*." "Very well then," I said, "you will of course understand also that we must depend entirely upon those learned men for all our knowledge of the meaning of these passages." "It is very true,

Sir," she replied. "What they say then, Martha," I continued, "is this; namely, that instead of, 'let them be so or so,' which is a wish, or a curse, it might have been, 'they shall be so or so,' which is merely to say, or to foretel, that God will certainly punish the wicked doers. And the next verse to the 11th, in the seventy-first Psalm, makes it almost certain that this must have been the real meaning here. 'As for me,' the Psalmist says, 'I will patiently abide alway;' why? 'not because I *wish* for shame and destruction upon my enemies; but because I *know* that God will certainly punish all the workers of wickedness, and deliver all those who trust in him.' This, you see, Martha, is a very different thing from the bad wish and the cruel curse; and it is more of a piece with the rest of Scripture. Besides, you must take this into the account which I will show you in another Psalm, as soon as I can find it. Here it is at the end of the eighty-third. The Psalm appears to be full of imprecations; but what is the purport of them? Why, that the wicked may seek the name of God, and know that the great Jehovah is the Highest over all the earth. If you saw a man going on from one wickedness to another, would it not be a charitable deed in you, to pray to God to save his soul by inflicting judgments upon him, which may stop him in his course, and compel him to reflect upon his condition, and so bring him to repentance?" "It would indeed, Sir," she answered. "In our own mode of praying," I said, "we use, generally, the mildest form of expression. In the Litany, for example, our petition is, that it may please God to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn their hearts; but how are their hearts to be turned? Probably, in many cases, not without severe afflictions. For these afflictions therefore we pray in reality, although not in words; so that there is no wide or material difference, in this respect, between the Psalmist and ourselves. But, in another respect, the difference between us is very wide and material. They were inspired men, David especially, and knew many things beforehand; and probably they were well aware when God would reclaim sinners by punishments and when not; as also when it might be possible to reclaim them by punishments, and when not; and therefore they prayed accordingly, and desired him in so many words, without softening the matter down, to execute in his own way his own great will and pleasure; and even to cut off the guilty at once, thereby shortening their crimes, and lessening their misery both here and hereafter. But we are ignorant of every thing future, and consequently in what way it may be fit for God to act; and therefore we very wisely and calmly pray only for the happy event; namely, that the hearts of our enemies may be changed. Do you comprehend this, Martha?"

"A great deal of it, Sir," she replied: "and I hope I shall be

able in future to explain some of these texts for myself, without any danger of mistaking them." "I hope so too," I said; "and therefore I will mention one more circumstance to you, which occurs to me in looking at this 83rd Psalm which is now open before me. In the second verse it is said, 'thine enemies make a murmuring, and they that hate thee have lifted up their head:' the enemies, then, of whom he speaks, are not his own personal enemies, but God's enemies. This is very much to be attended to, and this is very frequently the case; and there is no doubt but that the very best Christian, who would pray in the gentlest and most moderate words about his own enemies; would pray much more strongly and vehemently against the enemies; of God. God had determined to root out the nations of Canaan on account of their amazing idolatry and wickedness; he would not bear with them any longer; and, to execute vengeance on these his enemies, for several reasons, he employed the Jews as his instruments, with strict orders not to spare through a false pity, but to destroy utterly, as God would have it done. But, on account of the sins of the Jews themselves, God would not always help them even to execute his own will; so that far from being victorious over those impious and profligate nations, they themselves were often defeated in battle with great slaughter, and in danger of being entirely cut off. In this situation, therefore, they humbled themselves before their offended God, and besought him to forgive them their sins, and to restore them to his favour, and to assist them, as before, in doing what he had commanded them to do; namely, to destroy those whom he had devoted to destruction. Do you not think, Martha, that this circumstance would make their prayers very different from what our's need be, when we are praying about our personal enemies? Must not their prayers, in such a case, be more like bad wishes, and even curses and imprecations?" "It is very likely, Sir, indeed," she replied. "'Then this,'" I said, "will explain a great deal to you, which might otherwise mislead you; and I think it very probable that the corrupt Jews applied to their own enemies what they should have applied only to the enemies of God; and that this is what was meant by its being said of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. The enemies of God they were absolutely forced to pursue with a deadly hatred, but their own personal enemies they were to treat according to those texts which I have marked for you; that is, with all lenity and brotherly-kindness. Such a false interpretation of Scripture, therefore, and so bad a spirit resulting from it, Christ intended to correct when he told them to love their enemies."

This was what passed between us at that time; and in subsequent conversations both the same subject, and all the others upon

which we had talked before, were continually resumed, until she seemed to understand them thoroughly, and also to be thoroughly convinced, that the light in which I placed them was the true one. Meanwhile we had often joined together in prayer, and indubitable signs of a great improvement in her temper were showing themselves daily. Her pains were often very severe, but she bore them with a wonderful patience, and submitted herself entirely to her Maker's will. She no longer cursed her enemy, but prayed to God to spare him for repentance. Her high opinion of herself also was completely laid low; and at length she was ready enough to acknowledge, that even at the best she had never been more than an unprofitable servant.

But during this interval the great evil which the surgeons had apprehended had put on a more alarming aspect, and I was advised to send her to a hospital, in order that she might undergo a surgical operation. Accordingly I proposed it to her, and she made no difficulty about it whatever. The operation succeeded perfectly; and, after the absence of a month, she returned to us much improved in her health in every way, and now being able to walk to church, she was constantly there on Sundays; and, when the Sacrament was administered, she was always to be seen at the altar of her Lord. Her lace-work maintained her, and thus, with many bodily infirmities which were never likely to be cured, she was still contented and happy.

In this state of things, old Mrs. Bilson fell sick: she had been infirm from the beginning of my acquaintance with her, and quite incapable of acting upon the new principles which had been infused into the family; but she and her husband were both of them much improved, and the husband was a pretty regular attendant on public worship in the parish church. During her mother's sickness, which was long and painful, Martha was a splendid example of filial piety: she nursed her by day and by night—she read the Bible to her—she prayed with her continually—and all her little savings were expended in procuring her the extraordinary comforts which her declining health required. Not a single symptom of impatience was to be seen in this affectionate daughter; she depended upon her lace, but her lace was laid aside, without hesitation, when any kind action could be done for her mother; her own diseases required indulgence, but many a night did she watch over the sick bed, without closing her eye-lids, or lying down to rest: every glimmering of amendment in her patient was hailed with joy and gratitude; every reverse would have filled her with sorrow and dismay, if she had not been resigned to the dispensations of Providence. She entreated me to pray for her mother in the church, and to visit her as often at home as my other engagements would

allow ; in short, she neglected nothing to smooth the bed of sickness, and to illumine the shadowy path of death with a cheering light from another world.

One day when I called, her mother being asleep, she took me into the back chamber which was appropriated to herself ; and a chair being presented to me, with a request that I would sit down, she said to me in a plaintive voice, “ Ah, Sir, I remember very well what you told me about the mercy of a lingering disease to prepare us for death. My poor mother was always too full of the cares of this life, and gave herself no time to think of the care of her soul. But what could she do, Sir ? She was living from hand to mouth ; she never knew whether the next day would bring her bread. Her own health was bad, and my father’s not good, so they were never beforehand in the world ; and if my father was out of work, they were in distress at once. But they have always been honest, Sir, and *that* was my comfort ; and now my father goes to church, and my poor mother here, on her sick bed, has learnt how God will save sinners by Jesus Christ. I am sure, Sir, we have great reason for thankfulness.”

“ It is very true, Martha,” I replied ; “ and I am glad that you see the matter in that light. There are thousands in this parish who are in the situation which you so well describe ; living by the sweat of their brows, which they must needs do if they would live at all ; but living, apparently, as if they had no knowledge of a God, or Saviour. The difficulty of maintaining themselves being always uppermost in their mind, will hardly suffer them to think of any thing else. It is a piteous case ; and God, who is a God of pity and compassion, will, I trust, be merciful to them. Certainly indeed he will, if there be any possibility of it consistently with his other perfections. God, you know, Martha, must act according to all his perfections, and not according to one. Some men are merciful, and not just ; others are just, and not merciful ; and nobody who knows what men are is surprised at it. But in every act of God’s every perfection is equally consulted ; every act of his is equally wise, and just, and good, although *we* may fancy that we behold in some of his acts more of one perfection than another. He cuts down the wicked ; we cry out that it is just. Yes, so it is ; but it is wise and merciful too ; they might have heaped up on themselves a greater damnation. He spares another for repentance ; we praise his mercy. We are right ; but he is wise, and just too, in the same act : the person spared, although living in a total neglect of *him*, yet lived perhaps up to the best light which he had. And herein is one of the greatest comforts imaginable to those who reflect deeply on the subject, and are sometimes disquieted with the lot of great multitudes of mankind ; namely, that God will most assuredly help all who use aright the talents which they have : that he will

give them further and further means of improvement, according to the progress which they make in goodness; and that thus he will afford to every man the opportunity of being saved, and even of obtaining a higher place in his kingdom above. We are sure that God will do this, because we do not doubt that it is consistent with all his perfections to do so; but much more, because we see clearly the traces of such a dispensation in the gospel of his Son. Do you comprehend what I have been saying, Martha?"

"Every word, Sir," she answered; "and I hope you have not finished yet. I could hear you all day, Sir." There was a touching simplicity in this little speech which went to my heart; and it afforded so convincing a proof of her present edification, and of her further thirst after divine knowledge, that I was not only encouraged to go on, but also secretly blessed the Author of all good, who had crowned my endeavours with such signal success. But there are too many, I thought with myself, who feel very differently from poor humble Martha; too many, who are wise in their own conceit, and therefore destitute of that poverty of spirit, which alone would fit them for the reception of the Christian doctrines; too many, so engrossed and absorbed in their earthly pursuits, whether of ambition, business, or pleasure, that the voice of the Preacher, urging them to burst their bonds asunder, and to look upwards to their native skies, is entirely dissonant from all their notions. They hear him, indeed for example's sake or rather they seem to hear him, whilst neither admonition rouses them, nor persuasion wins them, nor entreaty bends them: they applaud brevity, and a quiet, languid tone, in the matter and the manner of their priest, when he speaks to them from the pulpit; because, perchance, they think that accumulated argument, and manly energy and sacred zeal might leave them without excuse: they fear eloquence, lest it pour forth a light which might confound them; they deprecate vehemence, lest it might shake them with the terrors of another world.

So it is; but whilst these ideas flashed across my mind, I had forgotten Martha and their cause. She still "stood fixed to hear," and seemed to wonder why I paused so long. At length, resuming the thread of my argument, I said, "Your parents have been honest, you tell me; and honesty is a very great virtue in persons of their rank. Every moment, it is likely, they have been tempted to violate it by their actual poverty, or by the fear of probable want; but they have preserved it through every difficulty, and every distress; and it is gone up, no doubt, for a memorial before God. They followed the light which they had; and now, therefore God has given them a greater, by which they seemed disposed to profit also; so that still higher blessings may be expected from so bountiful a master. I need not repeat to you now, that whom he loveth

he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; but the chastisement and the scourging may be ineffectual, the same as any other more mild dispensation: they may provoke impatience and murmurs, instead of producing self-abasement and self-examination. The consolation to you, therefore, Martha should be this: that your mother is advanced by her sufferings in the ways of Christian holiness; it is a proof, not only that God is working upon her, but that he is working effectually. You have reason indeed for thankfulness."

At this assurance of mine, Martha was unable to restrain her tears; and the conversation went no further because her mother had waked, and wanted her. Having returned into the sick chamber, I prayed with them, and so departed.

On another occasion, when the younger Mrs. Clayton was present, who sometimes stepped in to help Martha, being herself a very kind-hearted woman I happened to ask Mrs. Bilson, whether she had every thing about her to comfort her in her distressed situation; and whether her pains permitted her to pray to God continually. Her answer was, that, when she was awake, she did nothing else, and that "her death was all her study; and God," she said, "had raised her up so many good friends, that she wanted for nothing." "Yes," interposed Martha, "our neighbours are always ready to do us every little service in their power; and good Mrs. Warton, and others to whom *she* has recommended us, send us wine, and broth, and sago, and arrow-root; so that there is no difference now between the rich and ourselves." "Then you do not think, Martha," I said, "that a fine room to be sick in, and a handsome bed to be restless upon, and plenty of servants to turn the sick person from side to side, and to bring the medicines and the cordials, will lessen the pain or the restlessness, or promote sleep, or assist the study of death?" "No, indeed Sir," she replied, "*that* is all use and custom. Rich people suppose so, no doubt; and it might make them very unhappy to think of being as my poor mother is; but it is all thought, Sir, and nothing else; and when we are gone, what signifies it?" "Ay, ay," said her mother with great feeling, "and I had rather have my daughter there to wait upon me than all the servants in the world."

Upon this I turned towards Martha, and was not surprised to see that the tears had started forth from her eyes; so I left her to herself for a little while to enjoy this praise, which came from the heart; and I said to Mrs. Bilson, "do you think that your daughter would have gone away with Mrs. Bryan, when she quitted the parish and went abroad?" "To be sure, she would, Sir," was her answer; "for Mrs. Bryan wished to keep her, and she could not have got better wages in any other place." "Then," I said, "she could not have been with you now." "Why *that* is

very true, Sir," she replied; "I never thought of that before." "How wonderful," I said, "are God's dealings with us all! How gracious is he very often, when we think him most severe!" "Oh! yes, Sir," exclaimed Martha herself, "I see it now: let God choose for me in future; I will never more have any will of my own. What would my poor mother have done without me in this long sickness? And how should I have fretted, if I had heard of it, without being able to return; and still more, if she had died without seeing my face again!" "It seems then," I said, "that you are not sorry to have suffered as you have done; since it has brought you this great satisfaction of showing how much you honour and love your parent." "No, indeed, Sir," she answered, "it was a mercy, and so I shall always call it. And it is not in this one thing only, Sir, that it has turned out to be a mercy; but in many things besides. I am a different woman now."

"Very well, Martha," I said, "you were convinced long ago, that God had been good to you, although you did not know how; but by degrees, and day after day, as you became a different woman, you saw clearly what God's goodness was; and now we have discovered another thing, of another kind, which marks his goodness also. But I do not think that this will end in the mere delight of smoothing your poor sick mother's pillow; I am sure, indeed, that whilst you are exercising the duties of a pious daughter, which God will reward, you will be learning fresh virtues, and strengthening the old ones; and thus will qualify yourself for a still greater reward in heaven." "Ay, ay," exclaimed the mother with energy for one so sick, "God will bless her, Sir, *that* he will; he loves dutiful children."

Here again Martha was overpowered by her mother's blessings; so I reverted to what the old woman had said before, thinking it might be useful to draw it out a little, and to show them the different bearings of it. "Servants are paid for what they do; are they not?" I asked. "Yes, Sir," she answered, "they have their yearly wages." "And if they did not perform their duties, they would lose their place, and their wages; would they not?" I asked again. "To be sure they would, Sir," she replied. "Then," I said, "it is very likely, is it not, that all the services which they perform will partake of this character—will show, I mean, that they are the services of persons who are paid for them, and who would lose their wages if they did not perform them properly?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "*that* is the case, without doubt."—"Tell me, then," I said, "do you pay any thing to good Mrs. Clayton here, for coming so often as she does to assist in little household matters, and in moving you from your bed, whilst it is put in order for you, that you may lie more comfortably?" "Oh! dear, Sir," cried out Mrs. Clayton herself, "I should be ashamed

to take any thing for what I do for Mrs. Bilson, if it were ten times as much. She was always ready to do what she could for my mother-in-law; and, besides, such near neighbours ought to help one another." "You are in the right, Mrs. Clayton," I said, "but if *you* get nothing, and expect nothing for your services, it is still more likely, I presume, that Martha will not get any thing." "Bless you! Sir;" interposed Mrs. Bilson, "how should she get any thing, when I have nothing to give? But, perhaps, after all, I have something to give which Martha will like; my prayers to God for her, Sir, which, indeed, I have given already very often, and which I will give with my last breath. I will pray for Mrs. Clayton too; and for you, Sir, if you will let me." And upon saying this, she clasped her hands to do it.

I was touched with the conclusion of her sentence relating to myself, and with the gesture that followed it, which betokened, at once, piety, gratitude, and humility; but soon I replied "Thank you! thank you! good Mrs. Bilson; I shall be very glad of your prayers. A hearty, fervent prayer prevails much with God; he stoops from heaven to hear it, and he makes haste to bless it. But as to what we were talking about, you seem to think that the services of those who are paid nothing, and who expect nothing, are of a different kind from hired services, and to be prized at a higher rate: and you think justly; for such services being entirely of free will are more likely to be perfect in every respect, in sincerity, in constancy, in real kindness, and affection." "Yes, Sir, *that* is it," Mrs. Bilson answered, "and I will say it of my daughter before her face, that she is never tired of waiting upon me, and finding out hourly fresh methods of giving me ease; and, as for my infirmities, she bears them all, without a single impatient word or look. Mrs. Clayton, too, is a very friendly neighbour." "You have good reason, then," I said, "to be thankful, Mrs. Bilson, as indeed you appear to be; for some sick people have neither kind neighbours, nor dutiful children, nor hired servants to attend upon them; no, nor the common necessities of life." Then, turning to Martha, I asked her if she now understood the text which I had formerly mentioned to her, that God would give all these things to those who strive to serve him, without any constant and painful anxiety on their parts to get them; in the same manner as he feeds the sparrows which are not worth a farthing a-piece, whilst human beings have souls to be saved, and are therefore of countless value to themselves, and to God their Saviour. She answered immediately, that she understood it now, both in her mind and by her own experience; "but I will confess to you, Sir," she said, "that in the beginning of my mother's sickness I longed for the money which I had saved in service, and which had been squandered away so soon in wickedness. I

thought very often how much good I might do with it, if I had it, and what a number of little comforts I might procure for my poor mother here; but they are all come in, Sir, just the same as if I had bought them myself, and without asking for them too. *That* might have been painful and anxious; but God has graciously spared me all pain and all anxiety of that sort. Yet, Sir, with that money I might have saved our good friends all the expense which we cost them." "Yes, Martha," I said, "but then you would have deprived them of the delight which they have in their charitable deed, and of the increase of reward which may follow it; and, what is of consequence to yourself, you would not have acquired the same firm trust in Providence which you now have." "Yes, indeed," she replied, "so it is, Sir; and we always come to the same end, that God knows best, and does every thing for the best. I will trust in him for ever."

Thus did Martha devoutly express her pious feelings, and, as I did not wish to prolong this conversation, I proposed that we should all kneel down and pray. I chose a Psalm suitable to the present temper of our minds; and then, the Lord's Prayer and the benediction being added, I rose and left them.

Many more facts and insulated sayings might be adduced to describe and illustrate Martha's character in this period of her history; but, as they did not lead to any regular conversation, or require any particular remark from *me* in the discharge of my ministerial office, for the sake of brevity I omit them all. Her mother died; a bad winter followed; her father was out of work, and went to his own parish; Martha was left here alone.

§ 3.—MARTHA BILSON, HER FATHER, MRS. WARTON, &c.

ONE Sunday, after the administration of the sacrament, which Martha never missed when her infirmities allowed her to come to church, being detained in the church-yard by an unusual number of funerals, on hastening homeward I espied her sitting on a tombstone, and with her two old people, husband and wife, of the names of James and Sarah West, who came from the same quarter of the parish, at the distance of a mile and a half. "Hey-day," I exclaimed, going up to them and shortening my step, "where did you get your dinners to-day? Have you been to the hamlet and back again already, weak and lame as you all are?" "We have had our dinners upon this stone, Sir," answered Martha, for herself and the rest. Well, thought I, and the worms that are under it will soon

dine upon you all three. "But how is this," I inquired; and Martha replied, that the hamlet was too distant for them on sacrament Sundays, and they could not get back in time for afternoon church; so they brought a bit of bread and cheese just to stay upon their stomachs, and prevent sickness, which might happen if they waited for dinner so long beyond their common hour. Well, thought I to myself again, we are not without our Annas and our Simeons, even in these degenerate days; and James West, except in the want of a prophetic spirit, was just what Simeon might be supposed to have been, an aged, reverend man, with white hair, and fine, large, noble features, full of solemnity and devotion, and supporting his tall, but now bending body, with a patriarchal staff; ay, and worshipping too, like Jacob, whilst he leaned upon the top of it. In his mind he was like the old Claytons, simple and without guile; but he had not attended, like *them*, God's public worship since his earlier days, when he was regular enough. The consequence of this was that I never knew him, till one day passing by his cottage, I saw through the window, a corner of the linen blind being tucked up to let in more light, his venerable figure poring over a book in profound attention and study. I was struck, and stopped to gaze at him; but neither the sound of my steps before, nor the intercepting of the light now, aroused him from his close pondering. At length I knocked at the door, which was opened by his wife, and I and the old man were very soon friends. His book was a fine ancient copy of the Liturgy, with cuts; and from this time, when we first became acquainted, it was his constant companion to church.

"Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus,
"Singula dum capti circumvectamur amore."

To return,—I left this interesting party upon the grave-stone, and I cried out, as I went away, in reply to Martha, "No more satchels, my good people! God shall feed you as he does the ravens, without any care of your own.

On my arrival within doors I communicated this beautiful story to Mrs. Warton, who was as much charmed as myself with the excellent spirit of piety which shone in their behaviour, and immediately we directed the servants to carry them out some cold meat, and some bread and beer, to enable them to finish their dinners; so they did not faint by the way, although they came from far.

This was soon established into a good custom, and for some time the same party might have been seen on sacrament Sundays at dinner amongst the tombs; but one day a violent storm assailed them, and the servants, without any orders from *me* or Mrs. Warton, invited them into the house. We approved of this when we discovered it, and so it continues with those who survive to this day, but Mar-

tha rests in the Lord Jesus. The younger one has anticipated the elder by many years.

But I will not lay down my pen until I have shown how Martha Bilson played her part in the last act of this tragic drama. As soon as her sickness had increased upon her to such a degree as to keep her from church, she sent for me by old James, who came on week-days as well as on Sundays. I obeyed the summons at the first opportunity. She was in the same cottage as before, but on the ground-floor; and she was now, what old Mrs. Clayton had been, tenant-in-chief of the whole cottage; and it was crowded with lodgers from top to bottom in such a manner that she occupied only one apartment, the ancient school-room, herself. The skreen was replaced by coverlets, and blankets, and I know not what else, hanging on a line from one side of the room to the other, and leaving a passage to the back chamber and the stair-case, for the lodgers to go to their several apartments without interfering with Martha's. She had once occupied the garret, as being the cheapest, but she soon found it best to be at the bottom, both on account of her health, and for the better management of the whole concern.

It was a cold stormy day, and the front of the cottage was much exposed, with a western aspect, from which quarter the wind was then blowing. I knocked but nobody answered, so I opened the door myself, and in rushed the blast: and the curtain of blankets and coverlets began to flap about, and to whistle like the sails of some unfortunate ship caught in a hurricane. I closed the door again with what speed I could, but it demanded all my strength to do it. Then I considered how to penetrate the barrier, and soon espying where a coverlet and a blanket met, and were fastened together with a large pin, after taking out the pin I held them asunder with my two hands, and stooping under the line from which they were suspended, I was at once in the presence of poor Martha, who was lying upon her bed in the farthest corner of the room. Not a creature was with her, but she had a fire, and by her bedside a small table with an orange or two upon it, and a jug full of toast and water. Instantly the conversation which I once had with her in the time of her mother's sickness flashed across my mind; and alas! I thought, she has no tongue of dear friend or relation to sooth her; no countenance to rest upon with delight, as she turns her eyes around this desolate apartment; no hand, such as she might wish, to spread the pillow under her aching head. Her treacherous husband has ruined and abandoned her; she is sinking prematurely under *his* crimes. Her mother is gone to her long home, from whence there is no return hither to help those who tarry behind. Her father is in a distant poor-house, which she had once dreaded so much for herself, without the means, if he

had the strength, to travel so far to close her eyes, and lay her in her grave.

Whilst I was making these mournful reflections I had advanced close to the bed, but I did not attempt to speak; my heart was too full for utterance. She relieved me a little by beginning herself, and, although with a faint voice, yet in a much more cheerful tone than I had ventured to expect. "God bless you, Sir!" she said, "a thousand times, for coming so soon to see me: I am in no great pain, Sir; but this sickness is for death, I am sure of it." "If God's will be so, Martha," I replied, "you will submit to it, I am confident, with a pious, humble resignation; you will not falsify in a few moments the conviction and the preparation of years. God has visited you with many sorrows and heavy afflictions, and when you knew him you said, Thy will, O God, be done! When he comes to visit you again to release you from your labours, and to wipe the tears from your eyes, your speech will not be different. On the contrary, enlivened by the Christian's hope, and encouraged by your Redeemer's promises, and leaning upon his merits, you may well exclaim with joy, 'It is the bridegroom who cometh, let me go forth to meet him; I am ready.'"

As I spoke in this manner the tears coursed each other down her cheeks; but at length she answered, "If I am not ready, Sir—if I cannot cry out with joy, come, Lord Jesus—it is not because I would dispute God's will; no, good Sir, I am not now so ignorant, or mad; I bow to it; I adore it. But the painful remembrance of what I once was—a murmurer against that will, and an accuser of my God—with a spirit full of hatred and vengeance against a wretched fellow-creature—a poor worm like myself—the remembrance of these things (Oh, painful, painful, painful!) checks my desire of leaving this world, because it abates my hopes in the next. But you are the Minister of consolation, Sir; and you will console *me*, if you can do it, and yet speak the words of truth." "I can do it," I said, "with truth and justice, my poor friend. By the gracious terms of the Gospel, God considers what you are, not what you have been. He considers what he himself has made you, by the workings of his Holy Spirit, and by the discipline of his Providence; not what you were, when you lived in ignorance of *him* and of his laws; and, oh! merciful and good, he will reward his own deed; he will exalt you to that station for which he has qualified you by his own power. You might have been lost indeed, if you had been left to yourself; but by a wonderful train of providences, he rescued you from your perilous condition; he tried you, as gold is tried, in the sharp fire of adversity; he purged away the dross; he refined you; he brought you out of the furnace pure and bright; he has fitted you to shine as the stars for ever. It is natural enough, when death, as you suppose, draws nigh, and the

great mortal change is about to happen, that you should look back with sorrow upon the offences which you once committed against God; and although you yourself have repented of them and forsaken them, and your Redeemer has washed them away with his precious blood; although the Holy Ghost has implanted in you new principles and new desires, from whence have sprung new actions, and a new life—it is natural enough, that, like St. Paul, reflecting upon what you did, even in ignorance, a shade of trouble and uneasiness should darken a little the prospect which is before you, and which otherwise might have been too bright to bear: when you are going to meet God, it is natural enough, that you should grieve, that you ever grieved him; that you ever despised, or neglected, or abused infinite goodness and mercy; but when you come into his presence, you will see no cloud resting upon his countenance to dim the glorious light of it; the very sight will infuse into you at once unutterable joy; and you will be conscious in an instant that all is pardoned, all forgotten, all swallowed up and lost in the mighty rivers of bliss which will flow for ever.”

Here I stopped; for I was overpowered by my own picture, and could not proceed: and it would be difficult to say which was affected most, Martha, or myself; but I was the first to recover.—Her’s were tears of joy, which needed but to be indulged; mine were from some other source, not easily defined; but they were to be repressed, because they drowned the exertions of duty. I *did* repress them, and then continued thus:—

“Your lowliness of mind, my poor Martha, will be dear and acceptable to God. Do you remember how he speaks of himself? ‘Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with *him* also, who is of an humble and contrite spirit.’ This, you perceive, is the temper which God will bless, and sanctify with his presence. You are right, therefore, in abasing yourself before *him*, as we all who are but dust and ashes might well do; we who have nothing of our own whereof to glory. Whatever we are, it is of God’s grace alone, and not of ourselves. Where then is there any room for boasting; for presumption, or pride? It must all be utterly cast down: God abhors it; the meek and the lowly, and the trembling alone shall be lifted up, and stand before him at the last day with joy. You are one of these, Martha; and their lot shall be yours.”

By this time my poor patient was able to speak; but I cannot put what she said, without destroying its force, into a coherent sentence. It was a mixture of thanks to myself, of ejaculations to heaven, of confessions of unworthiness, of faith and trust in her Saviour, of prayer for the assistance and comfort of the Spirit, of earnest longings, and devout aspirations after immortality. My

pen cannot worthily record it; but it was heard, no doubt, and written, and recorded above. Nothing could properly follow it on my part but prayer; so reaching her prayer-book from her pillow, and kneeling down by the bed-side, I began almost involuntarily the service for the burial of the dead. In a common case, this would have been strikingly ill-timed; but here, the two first at least of the introductory sentences suited me admirably, and with them I stopped. The sentiments themselves, so consolatory to one whose days have been passed here in sorrow; so descriptive of a lively unshaken faith in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, from the dust and destruction of the grave, to a more glorious state in another and a better world; these sentiments, and the tone with which I pronounced them—the first passage with the tone of authority, the second of exultation—confirmed her in her principles, and still more elevated her thoughts. The Psalm, upon which I fell next, the 91st, did the same; but many parts required considerable alteration to adapt it to the purpose. I then read the collect in the communion of the sick, with alterations; also the Lord's Prayer, and the benediction at the end of the visitation-service. This being done, I rose, and sat down on a chair.

After a while, all being tranquil as when I first entered, I inquired of the sick woman, whom she had got to attend upon her.—“A very nice person, indeed, Sir,” she answered, “it is Mrs. Parkes, one of my lodgers; the same, whose mother you visited last year, in the chamber above, till she died. Ay, it was in *that* chamber that my own mother died too.” As she said this she was beginning to weep; but I interposed immediately; “No more of *that*, my good Martha; you will meet her again, to part no more; and in a place, from which all sorrow and sighing will flee far away. But I am glad that you have got Mrs. Parkes, whom I remember very well, and of whom I have a good opinion. I should fear however, that, as she has two small children, she would not be able to be much with you.” “Why, *that* is true, Sir,” she replied, “the infant in the cradle cried a little time ago, and she was forced to leave me in order to quiet him; so you found me quite alone, Sir; and, I dare say, your kind heart made you think me very forlorn, and deserted-like; but I have only to rap against the wall, Sir, and she will be here in a moment, if I want her; for she lodges but in the back chamber.”

If I understood this rightly, it was a pleasing specimen of a person, conscious of her melancholy circumstances, but perfectly prepared to conform to them, and unwilling to give pain to another by seeming to notice, or feel them. So I interpreted what she said, and it raised her in my admiration. “But where is Mrs. Clayton?” I asked. “She lives close by, and she used to be very friendly to you. I expected to have seen her here, and I wished to see her.”

"Ah, Sir," she replied, "we never meet now. Since that unfortunate business, of the funeral, she accuses *me*, Sir, of being the cause of your displeasure towards her; and so she will have nothing to do with me. You know very well, Sir, that I was not the cause as she supposes wrongly, but I cannot convince her of it. Perhaps, however, she will believe a dying woman, so I have sent to ask her to hear me again, and to forgive me, before I go; that I may die in peace with every human creature. She herself, too, might be sorry afterwards, when it is too late to do any good."

There appeared to me to be a beautiful simplicity and genuine goodness in this little speech, which merited not to be lost; but it compels me, for the sake of explaining it, to tell a story which will lower some of my characters in the estimation of the reader of these dialogues. As yet I presume, the Claytons stand high in his opinion; but the old lady shortly before her death used to complain, that they were not so regular at church as they had been accustomed to be; and she once said to me, "I cannot think, Sir, what is come to them all of late; there is a strange backwardness about their church, which I cannot account for. I hope they do not listen to the wicked things which ungodly men say about the Bible." Thus she expressed her fears; and, after her death, matters became worse, till they were ripe for what I am now about to relate.

It is customary in this parish, and, I believe, in all others which are populous, and in the neighbourhood of populous towns, where burying-grounds cannot be enlarged but at a great price, to exact a considerable fee for the burial of all persons not being parishioners, and not dying within the boundaries. The Claytons had a relation under those circumstances, whom they wished to bury here, and yet to avoid the fee; which could not, however, be done without a direct breach of truth; but it seemed incredible, that a family hitherto so respectable, and rewarded as they had been with every favour which I and Mrs. Warton could lavish upon them, should carry their disregard for truth to such an extreme as they eventually did. They brought the corpse clandestinely by night into the parish, and assured the sexton that the death had occurred here. But a rumour having reached me, when I was about to commence the service in the Church, that the fact was not so, I desired that the question might be put categorically to Mrs. Clayton herself, on whom I depended most, before she quitted the pew in which she was seated; and that she should be reminded, also, in whose sacred temple and presence she was. Still, unawed by the sanctity of the place, and the solemnity of the occasion, she did not hesitate to concur with the rest in the same falsehood. The thing, however, soon becoming notorious, every reward for good behaviour was withdrawn; shame overtook her, and she could no longer hold up her head.

It would have shown better taste, perhaps, to have kept this grievous fall of the Claytons entirely out of sight; but I mention it for the reason which I have stated above, and to do homage to truth; and I wish also to point it out as a case, in which it might have been well to have considered beforehand, how far a severe punishment was likely to be advantageous or mischievous. The occasion seemed to call for an example, and I made it without regarding consequences. But it turned out ill with respect to the Claytons themselves, whatever it might do with respect to others. They were evidently the worse for it; and, amongst other signs of deterioration, they threw themselves upon the poor's-rate, and they abandoned public worship altogether. Upon the whole, therefore, under similar circumstances, I should pursue gentler methods; and I recommend such methods to my brethren. By reducing a man to despair, you lose all influence over him; and, by consequence, all means of being useful to him in his spiritual concerns. To regain him is next to impossible.

But to come back to poor Martha. "You are very right," I said, "in sending for Mrs. Clayton, and giving her an opportunity to retract her unjust suspicions of you, and to put an end to her quarrel with you; and if she has any thing good yet remaining about her, she will be here without delay." "Yes, Sir," she answered; "but poor Mrs. Clayton may not be able to do as she would wish, and so we must not judge her harshly, if she should not come. The loss of the winter charities, and of the assistance which Mrs. Warton gave her in her confinements, and many other things, all occasioned by your discovery about the funeral, have vexed the whole family, and they may dissuade her from doing what she herself might think to be right." "Well, Martha," I said, "you will see; but at all events, it is kind of you to find excuses for her in this manner, and you will have done every thing which lies in your power; the rest you must leave to God. But, my poor Martha, Mrs. Warton will not be satisfied, when I tell her, that you have nobody to attend upon you, except Mrs. Parkes, who can spare so little time from her own children."

At this instant came in Mrs. Parkes herself, in a great hurry, pushing through the curtain, and stooping under the line with some difficulty, as she had a child in each arm, and both of them were crying bitterly. Upon seeing me, she dropped a low curtesy, and said, she was afraid Mrs. Bilson might want her; for she had been obliged to go out to the baker's, and had been absent longer than usual. "It is very good of you," I replied, "to be so careful of her; but I always observed that you were a kind young woman; and I have no doubt that God will bless you for it, and raise you up friends to nurse you when you are sick and in distress yourself." The tears came into her eyes, but she answered im-

mediately, smiling through her tears, "Oh, Sir, Mrs. Bilson is so ready to do what she can for every body, and she did so much for *me* when my own mother was ill, that it is a pleasure to help her now in her turn ; but if she does not want me this minute, I will step into my own room ; for these babes will trouble her, and you too, Sir, with their crying. I believe they are hungry, poor things." "Go then," I said, "and Martha will knock for you, when I have left her."

I was much pleased with this trait of modesty in Mrs. Parkes. The generality of women of the same rank, being entirely destitute of such a feeling, and without any sense of common decency, would have made no scruple of uncovering their bosoms before me ; but she was as chaste and guarded in her conduct as she was pure in her thoughts ; and she was pretty withal in her features, and cleanly in her person, and neat in her dress, and I found afterwards, that she possessed the entire affections of her husband, who never deserted her for the alehouse. When she was gone, I began to praise her to Martha, and I promised to mention her name and character to Mrs. Warton. "Ah, Sir," she said, "if I could but see the good Madam Warton once more before I die, it would rejoice my eyes ; and then there would be nothing left for me to desire, but—but—but—" Here her sobs drowned her voice, and the sentence was broken off unfinished ; but I guessed her meaning, and said, "You wish to see your poor old father, Martha ; I am sure you do ; and if he happens to be well, he may soon be here ; and, what between walking and riding in the wagons, the journey will cost but a trifle ; and, if he chooses to stay for a week or so, he may get a little job amongst some of his old masters, who will be glad to employ him again, when they know upon what an errand he is come." "Ah, God bless you, Sir," she cried out, with mingled sobs ; "difficulties are no difficulties to *you* ; to *me* it seemed impossible, but to *you* it is nothing. The poor old man will be here, Sir ; I know it, now ; and he will close my eyes yet."

Sad office, thought I, for a father ; and, when he has done it, he will have no kindred hand to close his own !

Martha and myself might now have wept till the setting sun had warned me of the flux of time ; but, on the sudden, collecting firmness enough to speak to her, I told her that I should administer the sacrament to her on the morrow. Then I departed with all speed.

The morrow came, and I repaired at the appointed time to Martha's cottage. On entering and passing the curtain, the first object, which caught my view, was the venerable head of old James West. He rose slowly from a chair, supported by his staff, to do me honour ; but I soon re-seated him. Next I saw Sarah, his

wife, sitting by the sick-bed ; she rose too, but I beckoned to her to resume her place. Now Martha spoke, " Here are my good old friends, Sir, come to partake with me of the last supper of our blessed Lord ; the last, Sir ; yes, it will be the last to *me* ; and it will prepare me, I pray God, for my *last* journey. I knew you would be glad to see them, Sir ; and they were themselves very glad to come. We have often ate together at the rectory, Sir, and knelt together at the rail of the altar to eat the bread of life ; and as we did it in sincerity, Sir, though with poor abilities, I think that God looked down upon us from heaven with his favour ; and I hope he will do the same now, although we are not in a sacred dwelling-place of his own."

" *That* he will, I am sure, Martha," I replied ; " the heart is every thing to *him*, the place nothing, except for *our* sakes. Walls and ceilings, however hallowed, cannot contain such a Being ; he fills the whole world with his presence ; he is every where at once ; he is *here* now ; where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is *he* in the midst, of them ; nay, if they be of a poor and humble spirit, his abode is in their very hearts. But he must be honoured before men ; and for public honour there must be a public place, set apart from every other use ; and he is so gracious, as to promise that he will dwell there in a more especial manner ; and that his ears shall ever be open in such places to receive and accept, with a peculiar favour, the united prayers of his whole congregation. Whilst you were able, Martha, you worshipped him there with these your aged friends continually ; and, perhaps, in the views of his divine mercy he joins you all three together ; and, I doubt not, he will look upon you now, when you serve him jointly in this secret chamber, with equal love and mercy. But before you are joined eternally, you must be separated for a time ; such is the law of our mortal being ; dust we are, and to dust we must return. There is a journey first to be taken, as you very well say, Martha ; and the sacrament is a proper preparation for it."

After this, silence ensued, and all appeared to be composing themselves for the holy rite ; so, having found a convenient spot for the old man to kneel upon at the foot of the bed, and unpacked my basket, and arranged the contents of it as well as I could under the existing circumstances, I went through the appointed forms ; but not without some thrilling of my nerves ; for the spectacle was very interesting, and the recollections springing from it peculiarly affecting. As for Martha, she was in tears during the whole ceremony ; nor were the feelings of the old people so blunted with age as to enable them to remain dry-eyed. The old man especially, by much the oldest of all, wiped his face once or twice with his handkerchief.

When all was finished, I dismissed *him* and his wife with many kind expressions of regard, and added that it would be good for Martha to be left for some time by herself, to meditate upon the sacred act that had just been performed. I intended to follow them instantly; but first, as I thought it would be comfortable to poor Martha, I told her, that I had great hopes Mrs. Warton would be stout enough to come to see her in a day or two, if the weather was favourable. Immediately when she heard this, the lips of the grateful woman began to quiver with intensity of feeling; but at length she said, "Oh! Sir, the poor people have had a great loss, and *you*, Sir, have had a much greater loss, in dear Madam's sickness. We used to see you together always in our cottages, and walking arm-in-arm through the parish, even in the farthest parts of it; for she could walk almost as well as yourself, Sir. And then, Sir, she made a hundred little inquiries, which you could not so properly do, or for which you want time, about the state of the poor families, and the cleanliness of their rooms, and the diseases of the children, and the medicines and the food necessary for them, and all their whole needful care and management, of which the parents are generally very ignorant, or neglectful. And, I am sure, it has been a pain to many of us, to have seen *you*, Sir, for so long a time, walking about by yourself, so lonely, without your spouse, and without a creature to talk to, as we know you do for hours together."

What Martha said was very true. It is indeed almost incredible, what a difference it makes, whether the clergyman's wife is able and disposed to perform those duties, or not. Many of them he himself cannot perform, at any rate; and they are of much greater importance than they may seem at first sight, both with respect to the comfort and well-being of the poor in their daily concerns, and also as regards his influence over them for a more substantial good. And there are other things in abundance, of which Martha perhaps was not aware, which can never flourish, or prosper in any degree, without the active superintendence of a lady in authority; especially the charitable institutions for the relief of her own sex. For every duty of this kind Mrs. Warton had a natural aptitude, and disposition; and by long practice, begun before her marriage, she had acquired all the requisite skill and experience; so that when the various advantages, likely to flow from these invaluable qualities, were at once intercepted by the state of her health, my own exertions appeared to be the less availing; and many things, essential to the improvement of the parish, seemed to retrograde, rather than to advance, and poor Martha was not the only person who made the same remark.

In reply to her I said, that it was certainly very unfortunate in

every way, both for myself and for others; but that it could not be helped. "No, Sir," she interposed, catching up my sentence before I had finished it, "it could not be *helped* indeed. Her kindness made her attempt what her strength was unequal to. With *her* heart she could not *help* assisting even the poorest fellow-creature in distress. We all know what her sufferings arise from, Sir; but they will be a blessing to her hereafter; yes, and here too, depend upon *that*, Sir. It is as sure as God is sure. My faith increases, as my death draws nearer. I can see now, Sir, through the blackest clouds. The afflictions of the bad, like *me*, will end in good; the afflictions of the good, like *her*, will end in good upon good, not to be spoken, not to be conceived."

Thus was the once impatient Martha, one that wrestled under God's yoke, complained against his dealings, and was too blind and too weak in faith to see to the end of them, a very babe in understanding, now so strong and enlightened as to be able to console, to exhort, and to confirm another; yes, even *him* who had exerted all his faculties and energies to do it for herself. Her allusion to the cause of Mrs. Warton's long imprisonment to her couch would have touched me to the quick, if I had not often heard similar remarks from persons of the same rank. An old crippled pauper, waiting in the back aisle after sacrament had fallen down in a fit; and Mrs. Warton, although so circumstanced as to require rest, and the husbanding of her strength, had been the first to rush from her pew, and by an extraordinary effort to lift the epileptic cripple from the ground. I was myself in the robing-room; the tumult called me out; and the mischief was visible enough, My wife was deadly pale, and cold drops of sweat stood upon her face. Years have elapsed, and she still suffers; but I do not now, as Martha lamented, wander about alone; she has borne me many children, the pledges of our love, and the resemblances, I hope, of herself, to accompany and to beguile my walks. But I return to the conversation.

"Oh! Martha," I exclaimed, "if Mrs. Warton were here, she would not permit you to call her good in that sense; nor to magnify, as you do, her humane action. She would never allow, that any were so good as to need no correction, or that any charitable deed, followed by sorrow here might claim an unspeakable reward hereafter. She trusts to something else much more effectual than any poor little deservings of her own. You know what I mean, Martha?" "Yes, yes, Sir," she replied, "I understand you very well; but her good deeds will go up for a memorial of her, nevertheless; and, when the day of reckoning comes, we cannot be ignorant how they will be accounted of *then*; because he, who will judge us, has told us himself. Ah! Sir, I fear many will be mistaken in that day, and will find that they have been building

upon sand. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction is true religion, Sir; it is showing our faith by our works; and I think it is St. Paul, Sir, who says, that charity is even better than faith."

"He does, indeed," I answered, "but I know you do not suppose St. Paul's meaning to be, that charity is better than faith, in such a sense as that you may choose charity, and leave faith alone. No, no, we can never arrive at the true Christian charity without the help of the true Christian faith. Faith must be the foundation; charity the building raised upon it; but the foundation is for the sake of the building; and so, in this sense, the building is better than the foundation, and charity better than faith. But this charity, of which St. Paul speaks, my good Martha, is not so little a thing as visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction; it embraces much more, which is so difficult and contrary to our nature, that we must be excellent Christians indeed, nay, almost perfect, to do it. But I will read to you what St. Paul actually says, out of your own Bible, which I am glad to see always at your elbow," "Ay, ay, Sir," she replied, "here it is on my pillow; and what could I do without such a companion and comforter! My mind is stayed upon it. But I am preventing you from reading to me, Sir."

"The passage," I said, "is in the 13th chapter of his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, and begins at the 4th verse, 'Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; charity never faileth.' See now, Martha, what a virtue this Christian charity is; how far it goes beyond visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction; what a struggle we must have daily and hourly with the bad passions of our nature before we can get it; meekness, and lowliness, and humility, and self-abasement, and patience, and long-suffering, you perceive, are the main parts of it; no envy, no jealousy, no ill will, no ill thought with respect to another, are allowed by it; in short, it contains almost every other virtue within itself. How much you must conquer, Martha, before you can reach this!"

"Yes, yes, Sir," She exclaimed feelingly, "nobody knows *that* better than I do, for nobody had more to conquer. I tremble even now, Sir, when I look back, and think what little charity I once had; or, to speak the truth, I ought to say what a slave I was to every uncharitable desire, and to all bitterness, wrath, malice, and evil speaking, and revenge. But thanks first, Sir, to *your* admonitions and instructions, both public and private; thanks next to that holy Book which you hold in your hands, and which I have

studied day and night; thanks, above all, to God's mighty spirit, who hath endued me with a strength not my own, and put feelings into my heart, to which I was an utter stranger before; thanks, Sir, to all these, I am now at perfect peace with every body in my own breast and thoughts. I have forgiven even my cruellest enemy; I have prayed for him in the night-watches on my bed; I have wept for him more often than I can say; nay, Sir, if I could but save his soul alive, I would gladly suffer here the very worst that this world might bring." Then suddenly clasping her hands together, and raising her eyes upwards, with a wonderful fervour, she added these emphatic words, "Spare him, O Lord Jesu; for thou hast redeemed *him* too!"

I had been wishing, at this crisis, for some additional declaration on this important part of Martha's history; and, for that purpose, I had said what I did upon charity. It succeeded to my heart's content; and now no doubt remained but that she had imbibed all the divine principles of the holy Christian character. She had evidently the spirit of Christ; and therefore I was fully satisfied that she was one of *His*. From every trial that I made of her, she came off victorious; from this last more than victorious. This was even to stretch Christianity itself as far it could go. The sound of that brief prayer, with all its pathetic and sublime energy, yet rings in my ears. At the time, I grasped her hands, which still remained in the attitude of supplication, and exclaiming with difficulty, "Martha, you are ripe for heaven; you are fit company for the spirits of the just made perfect; endure thus unto the end, and then wear your crown!" I hurried away before her devotion seemed to pause; and whether she heard me, or not, I cannot tell. In a few moments I was beyond the curtain, and out of the cottage; smitten deeply with the past scene, and revolving, as I paced slowly along afterwards, what it was to be a Christian.

From this day she declined rapidly, although it was too manifest, that she might still linger for a considerable time: but her voice beginning to be very feeble, Mrs. Warton determined to execute the intention of visiting her without further delay; and accordingly, having a fine morning for this arduous undertaking, she set out, and accomplished the walk with much less fatigue than we had just reason to fear. Upon our arrival we found old Bilson in his daughter's chamber; he had been there a few hours, and all the agony of the meeting was over. Mrs. Parkes was present at it, and some time afterwards attempted to describe it to me, but all in vain; she was of too gentle a mould herself, and too susceptible of sorrow to be able to paint, *vivâ voce*, the sorrows of another. So this scene is lost, but the fancy may easily paint it.

Upon seeing us the old man began to weep, and to exclaim that he was come to see his daughter die; for he was sure that she

would never get over it, nor rise from that bed again. "Well, well," I said "be firm, and do not talk in that manner to disturb her last moments. Keep your grief to yourself, and submit to God; he loves us all even better than we love ourselves; so that we are safest and best in his hands. If he saw fit, it would be just as easy for him to raise her up again from this sick bed, as it was to cast her upon it. Be silent, therefore, for you know nothing about it, my poor old friend. But your daughter is one of the wise virgins, and has trimmed her lamp, and will not be surprised by death and darkness, come when or as soon as they may. She has glorified God by many years of patience under trouble, and she will glorify him by meeting her end with the same patience; full of tranquillity, because full of faith. Your undue sorrow and idle speeches would do much harm to another not so well grounded in religion as Martha, and even to Martha they might do some harm, by making her uneasy for *you* although not for herself. Go and calm yourself, my poor old friend, in Mrs. Parkes's room, and we will send for you again presently." So he went, not unwillingly, but shedding tears profusely.

The imprudence of persons attending upon sick-beds is inconceivable, except by the clergy, and some others who are professionally in the habit of witnessing it; and, if it be not repressed at once by a pretty strong rebuke, it occurs perpetually in every shape, and in every form of expression. I have seen the sick themselves, in many instances, exceedingly distressed, and even agonized by it, and I was under great difficulty at first how to manage it. For a time, until I had considered the matter more accurately, I was content to take the imprudent persons out of the room with me when I went away, and to admonish them of their folly privately; but the mischief had been done, and was very often irreparable. A poor woman, suppose, broken down by a recent child-birth, with scarcely a particle of strength about her; depressed too in her spirits and haunted with the bitter thought of being soon snatched away from a numerous family of young children, has one of these foolish, croaking neighbours to demolish her altogether. I come in, perchance, with the hope of comforting and cheering her sinking mind a little, that it may the better support her sinking body; whilst I would almost imperceptibly prepare her for the worst. But immediately upon my appearance and inquiring how the sick woman is, this officious ill-judging friend cries out aloud, "Oh! Sir, she is as bad as she can be to be alive; an hour ago I thought she would have died, Sir; and I expect another attack every minute. She will never last out another attack, Sir; it will certainly carry her off, Sir; and then what will become of these helpless babes?" The effect of such a speech as this it is almost impossible to efface by any thing which I can say afterwards. In general, indeed,

whatever I might say afterwards, she suspects it of being only meant to keep her in ignorance of her approaching end.

Martha, no doubt, had heard distinctly my speech to her father, as I intended she should, because my chief view in making it was to comfort and support herself. But she had no immediate opportunity of noticing it; for Mrs. Warton was now leaning over her, and telling her, in a tone of tenderness and affection, that the pleasure of seeing her again was sadly lessened by seeing her so ill. For a while poor Martha was unable to return any answer. Her natural sensibility was this day tasked to the uttermost; first by the arrival of her father, and next by the visit of Mrs. Warton. In the meantime I had seated myself at the foot of the bed; and Mrs. Warton sat on the side, more conveniently for conversation, if the sick person should be able and disposed to talk. At length she said, after a great struggle to compose herself, "Ah! Madam, it is very, very kind of you to come so far to see such a poor creature as *me*. It would kill me quite if you were to catch any harm by it; and I am sure it must be a great risk which you run." "I hope not, my good Martha," replied Mrs. Warton, "but I should regret it the less, if my coming might be of any service to you." "Your coming will be of great service to me, dear Madam," she said, "for I shall be pleased with thinking that I have not forfeited your good opinion; and then, Madam, you are so gentle that you will sooth my troubles, and, above all, your wise counsel will teach me how to fight the last fight so as not to lose the prize, and be a cast-away." "Martha," Mrs. Warton answered, "I am come to be a learner, and not a teacher; and who would not give up all other knowledge for yours? All other knowledge is useless in comparison with knowing what you know; that is, how to have made the right preparation for another world. This knowledge you owe to a gracious God; it comes chiefly from the heart, Martha; it has little to do with the head, and therefore the wisest of the sons of men cannot get this knowledge, unless God touch their hearts. Dr. Warton has charmed me from time to time with telling me, that out of *your* heart no longer proceed any evil thoughts, any evil desires, any evil words, or actions; but on the contrary all the graces and fruits of holiness: so that you are now, without more counsel, truly prepared to die, and fully meet to be a partaker after death of the inheritance of the saints in light." "Would that it might be so, Madam!" said Martha, whilst her face was slightly convulsed with the praise bestowed upon her, and with the anticipation of future joys thus suggested to her fancy; "but I shall owe it all to good Dr. Warton and yourself, Madam; for I well remember how you were both sent to me by a kind Providence, and how you bore with my ill temper, and with what patience and perseverance you condescended to instruct me, unwilling

as I was to learn, in the ways of God, and in the book of life, and in the Gospel of Jesus Christ ; and I remember well, too, when the Doctor sometimes rebuked me with all authority, as became one of Christ's ministers, how *you* stepped in, dear Madam, with your gentle sayings, and softened down his just severity, and healed all my wounds. Ah! Madam, I believe it was *then* that you met with your sad calamity, which has prevented you, for so many years, from coming amongst us, to the unspeakable loss of many ; for many might have been blessed as I have been." " Such was God's will, Martha," replied Mrs. Warton, " and I hope I have learnt the difficult lesson of submission to it ; but if I had it yet to learn, I might profit by *your* example ; you might now teach your teacher more effectually than I could then have pretended to teach *you*. I could then only teach you the reason of the thing ; but you would now teach *me* the practice of the thing itself."

" Ah! kind Madam," said poor Martha, with a mournful, faltering voice, " my practice, I fear, is not so good as you are pleased to think it. Here is my poor old father, and I blessed Providence for sending him to me in time ; but he has shaken me sadly by his grief. I thought it would console me to have him with me at the last, but he wants it himself more than I do ; and I who so hardly support one, must now support both. But I hope what the Doctor said will be useful to him. Yet it is a pitiful thing, Madam, to out-live every body ; when I am gone, (and you see, dear lady, how fast I am going,) there will be no human creature left to care for him, or to beg a blessing upon his head. He is a burden upon his parish, and they will wish to be rid of it ; not a tear will be shed over him as they lay him out, and his fellow-paupers will carry him unwept on their shoulders to his grave. *She* will be already there, who should have received his last breath and closed his eyes, whilst they had yet power to look upon her, and to take a long farewell. *She* should have closed *his*, not *he* hers ; *this* would have been the order of nature, and she herself should have had a husband or children to do the same sad office for *her*. *She* will be already there, but far asunder from *him* ; and their dust will not be mingled together."

Whilst she was speaking thus, the tears dropped upon her from Mrs. Warton's face. She perceived it, and continued, " Ah! dear Madam, how does your kind heart feel for me! But it is wrong to trouble you so much, and I shall lose, perhaps, something of your esteem ; and, what is worse, God himself will not be pleased, if I seem thus to question his doings. But it is only to seem to do so, Madam ; for I believe, and am sure, as the Doctor told my father, that we are always best and safest in God's hands. Yet my thoughts will dwell upon what has been, and what is to be, whether I will or not."

Martha was now almost beyond tears, but a few drops were visible in the deep sockets of her eyes ; and she paused here, as if for an instant, to collect her strength, but with no apparent intention of stopping altogether. She was prolific in the description of the sorrowful circumstances of herself and her father, and would have gone on, no doubt, to finish the picture ; but Mrs. Warton opportunely interposed, and catching up her last expression, said, “ And you will do well, good Martha, to think continually what is to be hereafter ; I do not mean that little hereafter which will end with our lives, but that great hereafter which will never end. The other is so short a thing at the longest, and so poor a thing at the best, that it is not worth the thinking of ; but this is worthy of the thoughts of an immortal soul, and alone worthy. It is to think about the greatest things that can enter into the mind of man—how we are to see God himself face to face, and to be transported with joy at such a sight ; how we are to hear millions of blessed spirits attuning their harps, and singing hallelujahs to his praise ; how we are to be with our divine Master and Redeemer, and like him too, in the glorious company of all the good that have been from the foundations of the world ; and to meet again our own dear friends and relations in such happy realms : can any thing be greater or better to think of than this ? Why, if we were to have these enjoyments but for a day ; this enrapturing view of almighty goodness, this heavenly music, this delightful society of all whom we love, and reverence, and adore ; it would be cheaply bought with the sufferings of a whole life. But these enjoyments are to last for ever, Martha ; they are to have no end. O wonderful thought ! An eternity of bliss, never cloying or surfeiting, always fresh and new ! Who will stoop to think of any thing else ? Who will imbitter their thoughts with the recollection of what has been, or with the fear of what is to be, in this short stage of their being, which is less than the mere sojourning of a traveller at an inn ? ”

Such, substantially, was what Mrs. Warton said to Martha ; and it is not surprising that the effect of it upon a person so far advanced in Christian attainments as Martha was, should be greatly successful. Her countenance, as Mrs. Warton went along, betokened at first a sense of self-degradation ; that she had, for a moment even, chained down her thoughts to these wretched, low, terrestrial, transitory things, instead of bidding them soar aloft to celestial, glorious, everlasting scenes of bliss ; but at length it brightened with the description of the scenes themselves into that of one who was already in them, and she exclaimed, with a sort of supernatural strength and energy, when Mrs. Warton had finished, “ Farewell then to this world and to all its concerns ; henceforth !—henceforth I shut it from my eyes, and try by faith to pierce into the world above. Nothing earthly shall disturb me more. I

will wait thy call, O gracious God and Father, in still silence ; thinking only of thy infinite love to men in Christ Jesus thy Son, and commending my spirit into thy hands, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour!" Then relaxing into a softer and feebler tone, she said, " And farewell you too, kind Madam ! Did I not foretel that your counsels would be wise, and your words gentle and soothing ? So they have been always to *me*, and now not least when I needed it most. Will the good Doctor finish all his labours in my behalf by reading the commendatory prayer for me ? And then nothing further will remain to be done for me here, but to bury me decently."

Upon this invitation I rose from my seat on the bed, and tapped against the wall for the old man to come. Meanwhile, at her own desire, Mrs. Warton and Mrs. Parkes had placed Martha upon her back, as if in that posture she was now about to receive the stroke of death. When this was done, she opened her eyes, and conveying her sight from side to side, as if she wanted, or missed something, at length she rested with apparent satisfaction upon the countenance of her aged father, who was approaching the bed. Then suddenly she closed them again, and we all knelt down, and her wish was accomplished. It was a solemn, and awful, and a very trying act; reaching, I believe, to the utmost extent of the fortitude of every one of us. I added the benediction at the end of the visitation service, without changing any thing in it; for I could not.

After this we all rose; and Mrs. Warton and myself just touching Martha's hands, which were folded over her face, we slowly left the room. I looked back twice or thrice; but she still remained in the same posture, and would trust herself no more to behold what she respected, or loved. For several days, however, she was still alive; and towards the last it was scarcely possible to say, whether she was alive or not. Her breathing was not perceptible by *me*, but her face was not the face of the dead. If she performed any religious act during this interval, it was transacted in the recesses of her own breast, and locked up there from all but God. She received some liquid food, but she never spoke.

Here this history should terminate, that I might neither blame myself, nor lower another, as I have done the Claytons, in the good opinion of the reader. But I prefer truth to all false embellishments, and must therefore risk his displeasure by spoiling my story, so far as truth can spoil it. Besides, as I pretend to write for the instruction of my younger brethren, I must point out faults, for which they would afterwards grieve; if, by a negligence similar to mine, they suffered themselves to be guilty of them.

On the Sunday after Martha's death, there were five corpses of poor people brought to be buried at the parish expense. In such

cases the passing knell of the dead is rung by the least of the church-bells; no undertaker is employed, nor, in general, any bearers but from the poor-house; the coffin, furnished by contract, is only so many pieces of unornamented wood rudely nailed together; the body is not carried into the church, but straight from the gates to the grave; and most probably there is no train of mourners behind, because there is nothing to bring mourners together; no ensigns of grief to be worn; no funeral-feast to be eaten; nothing but a pious regard for the memory of the dead.— And I must own, although it will be reckoned, perhaps, but a superstitious weakness, that I have been struck to the heart with the sight of the utter destitution in which the mortal remains of my fellow-men have sometimes returned to their own fellow-dust.— Such a funeral was to me more woful than all the splendid trappings of wo could have made it; but the spirit nevertheless might have been already with its Saviour in Paradise, expecting a throne and a crown; or, perchance, (too painful thought, but too common an occurrence!) it had winged its flight from this earth, without the solemn benedictions of the priest, without the true fear of God, without the saving faith of a Christian.

On the present occasion the very number added to the other melancholy reflections. There were five separate graves; but they were near together, so that one service sufficed for all. I took my station in the front of three, which were in the centre; and when the bodies were deposited in them, they were completely abandoned; no creature remained, but one of the sexton's deputies, to scatter, at the appointed moment, a few particles of kindred earth upon the coffins. On my right was a single grave, and a single man was standing on the edge of it; but he had three infants with him, one in his arms. He was in dirty tattered clothes, his week-day's suit, for he had no others in which to grace the Sabbath; and the dress of his children bespoke the same wretched poverty. You might read in his countenance the grief which was gnawing his heart; but he neither sobbed aloud, nor shed a silent tear; his eyes and his thoughts were ever in the grave, except once, when he looked up with **agony**, at the touching expression of our hope, that the departed souls are resting in the Lord Jesus; but, all the time, the infant, which he carried, was playing with his hair, and smiling at its own fingers; unconscious of its mighty loss; unconscious that its mother was sleeping below, never to awake again in this world.

On my left there was a thicker mass, and some sounds of sorrow were issuing from it; so I studiously avoided the turning my head on that side, until I had finished the mournful ceremony, and was about to retire. Immediately the gray locks of old James West caught my eye; by his side was Sarah. I was alarmed and looked again. Next them stood old Bilson himself, with his face bent downwards, lingering over the grave and weeping. Not a

particle of doubt any longer remained; I had buried Martha, and I had disregarded her last injunctions, which were, "to bury her decently." So foolishly sure was I, that it would be done, without any interference on my part, that I had dismissed the matter from my mind altogether. Who so fit to go through the church to the grave as this good creature, who loved and frequented the church so much whilst she was alive?

On the following day I would have gone to the hamlet, if it had been possible, to make inquiries. On the Tuesday I went; but the old man was not to be seen; he had returned to his own parish, with the produce of the sale of Martha's bed and other furniture in his pocket, which was said to be amply sufficient to have "buried her decently."

CHAPTER II.

JANE WHISTON—RELIGIOUS MELANCHOLY.

§ 1.—MRS. WHISTON, HER AUNT, MRS. GRAVES, &c.

UPON returning home one day from my usual morning's walk, I found that a message had been left at my house, to desire me to call upon my neighbour, Mrs. Graves, who had under her care a young woman reported to be dangerously sick. Mrs. Graves herself was the wife of a working malster, and had a large family of small unhealthy children; yet with her husband's earnings, and with some washing which she took in, she managed to keep them all very tidy and comfortable, and to rent a cottage beyond the ordinary size, which had two bed-chambers, and a garden, and the advantage of being detached from other buildings. On my arrival, the eldest child immediately conducted me up stairs, where I saw her mother, and three other women, friends and relations of the sick person; and I observed the sick person herself in bed, apparently in a state of perfect tranquillity. Her face was blotched a little with red pustules, and she seemed to have lost her strength; otherwise there was no particular mark of disease about her—at least to an unpractised eye. I was told afterwards, that her pulse was scarcely perceptible.

Not having had any opportunity of making previous inquiries, I accosted her at once with one of my usual questions, and desired to know with what complaint she was afflicted. She answered in a feeble tone, "Bad thoughts, Sir; bad thoughts; I am troubled with very bad thoughts."—This being quite new to me, I was at a loss how to act, and looked round upon the other women for further information; upon which Mrs. Graves told me, that she had been labouring for a long time under an attack of low fever, which had deprived her of all power to help herself; and that she complained besides of these bad thoughts, which disturbed her rest, and were wearing her out by night and day. "But what they are, Sir,"

she said, "I cannot pretend to describe." "Perhaps these other friends of hers can acquaint me?" I replied; but they were all silent, or only spoke in such a manner as to show, that they either could not, or did not intend to explain the case to me, Turning, therefore, to the sick woman, I asked her if she was troubled with the bad thoughts at the present moment. "No, Sir," she answered, "they left me, as you came up the stairs; but I have them very often; and for a great length of time." Still I was exploring in the dark, and the poor, woman herself did not help me. She had heard me questioning her friends as to the nature of the bad thoughts and yet she made no attempt to tell me what they were. I began, therefore, to suspect some mystery about it; and feeling it unpleasant to press any of them to disclose what, perhaps, they might wish to conceal, I trusted to circumstances to give me by degrees the necessary knowledge upon this subject. I therefore proceeded in the following manner.

"Had you these bad thoughts before your sickness, or did your sickness cause them?" "They caused my sickness, Sir, I think," she answered, "I had them some time before." What then—I said to myself—has this poor woman met with some terrible affliction, which weighs her spirits to the ground; or has she been guilty of some horrid crime, which fills her soul with anguish, and banishes peace from her breast? I will try her on these suppositions. So I asked, first, if she was married?—I know your countenance," I said, "young woman; but I am ignorant of your name and circumstances." "Yes, Sir, I am married," she replied, "and as times go, I believe I have no great reason to complain of my husband." "You have been tolerably happy together, have you?" I inquired. "Yes, Sir," she answered, "pretty well of that; considering all things." "And have you had any children by your marriage?" I inquired again. "Yes Sir," she replied, "but they are dead, and I thank God for it." "Why?" I asked, "why do you thank God for the loss of that which is generally considered a great blessing?" "Because it would be too painful for me to part from them, and leave them so young behind me," was her answer. "Do you suppose your own life to be in immediate danger then?" I said, with tenderness. "Yes, Sir, I do," was her reply, which she uttered with rather a faltering voice. "The doctor can do nothing for me, and I feel myself going fast. The bad thoughts torment me so!" "But why should they torment you at all, my good woman?" I inquired. She was silent; so I inquired again: "Do you encourage them to come?" "No, *that* I don't," she answered eagerly. "Do you consent to them, or agree with them, or approve of them, when they come?" "No, *that* I don't, neither," she answered again with equal eagerness. "Then listen to *me*," I said, "my poor afflicted creature; and be-

lieve what I am about to tell you, and I am sure I can give you comfort." Her eyes were now fixed earnestly upon me, as if in expectation of some joyful intelligence; and so I told her, that these bad thoughts, whatever they might be, would do her no harm hereafter; that God would never call her to an account for them; and, in short, that they were not sins. Adam's lines to Eve were in my mind, and I gave her the sense of them:—

" Evil into the mind of God or man

" May come and go, so unapproved, and leave

" No spot or blame behind."

This consolation, however, did not seem to reach her case, as I judged by her countenance; for she said nothing to assist my conjectures, one way or the other. I tried, therefore, to get at some decisive fact. by asking her, as she expected soon to die, whether she had a well-grounded hope of being happy in the next world. At this question she shuddered dreadfully, and after a time exclaimed, "No, Sir, indeed, the devil will not let me have any hope at all." "The devil?" I inquired hastily, "It is the devil, then, who thus torments you?" Yes, Sir," she replied, "it is the devil, who puts the bad thoughts into my head, and very bad they are indeed." "Ah!" I said, "I pity you from my heart, and I can readily conceive what some of these bad thoughts may be. Our Bibles tell us the history of the holy Job; how the devil afflicted him with every possible affliction, and brought him down to the very brink of the grave; and then, when he had got this advantage over him, and human nature was incapable of supporting such immense sufferings, he would have prevailed upon the poor man, in order to terminate those sufferings at once, to curse God, and die. But Job was not to be so deceived. His trust in the infinite wisdom and goodness of the Almighty received at the first a great shock; but it ultimately triumphed. His faith sustained the grievous trial, and assured him that, if not here, yet hereafter, if he endured to the end with a patient submission to God's will, he should certainly see with his own eyes the just dealings of God, and the exact performance of all his promises. I call upon you, therefore, my good woman, to imitate the pattern of this excellent man, and I say also to you, in the language of Scripture, 'resist the devil, and he will flee from you.'"

She was evidently struck, and pleased at least with my story of Job, for her eyes brightened up a little; but she was quite silent, and soon relapsed into her former state of quietude. Under these circumstances, I thought it most advisable to offer to pray with her, and so I said, "The best and most effectual way to resist the devil is by prayer; I will therefore, kneel down, and try what can be done in that manner. Are you able to pray yourself?"

"Yes," she answered, "sometimes I am; but not often enough, and never when the bad thoughts trouble me." "Well then," I said, "join with me now, whilst the bad thoughts are away, and we will ask God to be so gracious as to keep them away in future for ever. God's power is far superior to the devil's power; and, if it please him, he can either send his good Angels to support and protect you against the bad angels, or by a single word command the devil back to chains and darkness. But we must pray to him to do this."

Mrs. Graves had now placed a cushion for me, and I opened at once to the prayer for persons who are troubled in mind. It seemed to be admirably adapted to my purpose; and I found it necessary to alter and add but little. Instead of saying, 'thou makest her to possess her former iniquities,' I said, 'thou permittest her to be harassed with wicked thoughts;' and in speaking of her temptations, and distempers, and enemies, I brought the prayer home to her own feelings by the use of forcible explanatory epithets. Having finished it, I asked her whether it had been a comfort to her, and she replied immediately, that it was very comfortable, and that she was quite easy. She also expressed a strong wish that I should proceed. So I turned to the Psalms, and employed myself for ten minutes in reading such passages as caught my eye, and appeared most applicable, or were capable of becoming so by a slight change. I began with the third Psalm, which suited me throughout, the tenses only being altered, until I came to the 6th verse, where I substituted for 'ten thousands of the people,' 'all the hosts of the wicked spirits.'

When I had read in this manner as much as I thought likely to be useful for the present, I resumed the conversation, and said, "Now that you appear to be more at ease, I may venture, perhaps, to talk with you a little; and first I must tell you how much it grieved me to hear you say that you had no hope of salvation in the next world. What is there to deprive you of such a hope?—It is sin only which separates us from God and heaven; and the blood of Christ washes out all sin. But, from my observation of your appearance and respectable behaviour in your days of health, I have reason to think that your life cannot have been a wicked one."

The poor woman looked wistfully at me, but before she could answer, Mrs. Graves exclaimed, "No, Sir, *that* it has not; she has always been a good creature; and I am sure she has been a very kind friend to *me*. God will reward her for it!" Here her tears interrupted her, and at the same time one of the women who were standing by the bed-side interposed, and said, "Ah! Mrs. Graves, do not call her good; there are none good but the regenerate,—no, not one. The thoughts of the hearts of men unconverted are no—

thing but evil continually. The heart itself is desperately wicked; who can know it? It must be converted, or it will be all corruption to the end."

Thus she corrected Mrs. Graves; and, puffed up with her superior knowledge of the Scriptures, looked round for approbation and applause. I was surprised; but a new light broke in upon me, and I turned to see what effect this speech had produced upon the sick person. She moved her head from side to side, and betrayed considerable agitation and alarm. Immediately, therefore, I said, "Calm yourself, my poor young woman! Those texts require to be explained, and then you will find them not applicable to your own case; but at all events they are quite out of season now." Then addressing myself to the meddling, officious, ill-judging friend, I reminded her of what she had just heard in the prayer which I had offered up to God, that he would not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. "Here," I said, "is a sick person, stretched, as she herself thinks, on the bed of death. She despairs of her own condition, on account of the painful thoughts with which it pleases God that she should be afflicted. She humbles herself under his mighty hand; and has he not promised that all such shall be lifted up? Let us then be his instruments in the good work of cheering her troubled mind and raising her broken spirits. What if there be none righteous on earth; what if all be desperately wicked; did not Christ die for all? Did he not by his death put the very chief of sinners into a state of reconciliation with his heavenly father? Place then thy faith and trust in *Him*," I said, turning to the sick woman, "and thy sins shall be forgiven thee. He is mighty to save, and he is as merciful as he is mighty. If he were here he would bid thee, 'go in peace.'"

The effect of this was even greater than I expected. She blessed me again and again, and said, that these were truly glad tidings to her, and that it was long, very long, since she had felt so comfortable as she did now. Thinking this a favourable opportunity, therefore, I asked, what I was very desirous to ascertain, whether she had been in the habit of going to church in the days of her health and strength. My mind was strongly impressed with an idea that she had been a frequenter of the conventicle, and that she had been dabbling in the frightful doctrines which are too often inculcated there. Nor was I mistaken. She herself made me no answer. Mrs. Graves, too, who had been so ready to praise her before, was now silent. Upon which the same woman, who had already interfered so inopportunately, answered for her, that she had not been in the habit of going to church, but that she was a regular attendant on the Lord's day at Sion Chapel, "where the true Gospel," she said, "is always preached."

"That I should rather doubt," I rejoined immediately; "at

least, they who have been in the habit of hearing the true Gospel preached to them are very seldom in such a condition as this.—There is no knowing, indeed, how God may please to afflict, for the sake of trying, his most faithful servants; but the Gospel will not admit of despair. If there be a limit beyond which God will not be provoked any longer by the sins of men, yet the limit is quite unknown to *us*, and the same Saviour is always sitting at the right hand of God to intercede for sinners; and therefore, if they betake themselves to him, as he has invited them to do, there is hope for them to the very last.” “Yes, Sir,” she replied, “but my niece there is not converted. She has sought the Lord, I believe, and all of us have done it, with prayers and tears; but her heart is untouched, and as hard as ever.”

The whole secret appeared to *me* to be now disclosed; and at first I doubted how to proceed. But, after a moment’s consideration, being assured, that, if I could not convince this methodistical aunt, I could at least reduce her to silence, and that it would be better for the sick woman herself to hear the discussion than to have the doctrine explained by me in private, I begged to be informed what was meant by this word ‘converted.’ “Oh! Sir,” she answered without hesitation, “it is the new birth. We must all be born again of the Spirit; and there is no salvation without it. All the elect go through it of course, in some period of their lives, sooner or later.” “Well,” I said, “supposing this to be true, may we know when we go through it?” “To be sure, Sir,” she replied; “it never takes place without some labour and difficulty, and sometimes it costs a great deal; so that it may be certainly known.” “And when it is over, what comes afterwards?” I inquired. “Oh! then, Sir,” she said, “all doubts and misgivings about our eternal state are at an end: the heart is all joy and love in the Lord; and we feel as they who are sealed for redemption, and can never fall.”

Having advanced so far towards the knowledge of her meaning, I now asked her whether she thought that God wished us all to become wiser and better. She allowed that he must so wish. “Because,” I said, “the wiser and better we are, the happier we shall be, and the more disposed to make all happy around us; and God’s wish is, that all his creatures should be happy. Is it not so?” She assented. “Well, then,” I continued, “he does not care about any other things which men call valuable; such as riches, and honours, and power and the pleasures of this world, because they can never produce true and lasting happiness; and therefore he has given us in the Gospel no rules for getting them; but, as to wisdom and goodness, because in his sight they are all in all, he has given us abundance of rules about them; has he not?” “Yes, Sir,” she said, “he has, certainly.” “Aye, indeed,” I rejoined,

“the Bible is full of them; they make the main part of it. Well, and with respect to wisdom and goodness, is not one the means, and the other the end?” She did not seem to comprehend me, so I asked her, if she thought it was of any real use to us to become wiser, unless we also by means of our wisdom became better. “Why,” she answered, “she did not know that it was.”—“Then we come to this,” I said, “do we not?—that the one great thing most needful for us, and what God chiefly wishes, is, that we should become, by every means, every day, if possible, better and better; that we may resemble himself more and more in goodness and in happiness?” She hesitated, but she did not deny it.

My antagonist being brought to this point, I now put the question to her directly, whether every person who was converted, as she called it, and went through the new birth, became at once a better man in consequence of it; because it seems, that if he do not, his conversion, or new birth, will be of no use to him whatever.” “Of no use to him, Sir!” she cried with astonishment—“of no use to him to be converted! Of no use to him to be born again!” “No,” I said, “of none whatever, by your own confession, unless it make him a better man. For God only requires more and more goodness, in order that he may make us happier and happier, and more and more fit for immortality. If conversion, or the new birth, produce this effect, then they are valuable, like any other means producing the same end.” “But let me ask you, Sir,” she said contemptuously, “is it of no use to a poor sinner to know that he will be saved?” “Certainly,” I answered, “it is of great use to a sinner to know that he will be saved in the only way that he can be saved, namely, by embracing and following the Gospel; but every Christian knows this already from the Gospel itself, and he cannot want to know it in any other manner.” “But, Sir, I ask you again,” she exclaimed with somewhat of petulance, “is there not some difference between reading a thing in a book, and feeling a thing in your own heart?” “There may be,” I said, “a very great difference indeed, speaking generally; but, in this case, as the book is God’s word, and God cannot lie, what you read there is most undoubtedly true, and impossible to be overthrown, and you yourself may be as sure of it as if you knew it by any of your senses. Indeed, if this be not so, where is your faith, and what is it? Is not faith the evidence of things not seen? Then, on the other hand, as to your heart and your senses, it is very possible, and even likely, that they may be dreadfully deceived. If the heart be desperately wicked, as you say, it is desperately deceitful too; and the senses are by no means to be trusted in matters of this kind. No, no; Scripture is our only safeguard, and can never deceive us. If we know and believe

in Scripture, we want nothing else for our guidance and assurance."

As she now appeared to be rather at a loss, I went on thus: "Let us see then what Scripture tells us on these points. I presume you mean that these conversions and new births are all effected by the Holy Spirit." "To be sure, I do," she replied. "Well then," I said, "the fruits of the Spirit, according to Scripture, are in all goodness and holiness and righteousness; so that you may always know, by these fruits, what kind of spirit influences or dwells in any man's heart. And, if a man goes on improving daily, and bearing more and more of these fruits, the consciousness of these improvements is the surest witness that he can possibly have, with respect to his being in a state of salvation. No other witness can be half so sure; no, not even a power of performing miracles; much less a mere inward feeling and conviction of the mind, or heart, that he shall be certainly saved. For what solid ground is there for such a feeling and conviction, independently of our becoming better men? And if this fact of our becoming better men must needs be the test, what use is there of the other? I fear, indeed, that the other is only the fancy, or imagination, of an overheated brain. Indeed I am sure it is, if they who pretend to it go on sinning as before. In such a case, I do not hesitate to call it a trick of the Devil himself. Here is one evil Spirit endeavouring to thrust this poor sick young woman into desperation; but there is a worse, which, by some strange fiction of a new birth after baptism, and by some unaccountable and indescribable feelings, called conversion, exalts men in their own idea, and places them in a state of fancied security; and so they become naturally careless, and too often plunge into fresh sins, which conduct them necessarily, if not repented of, to final perdition."

Here she caught me up, and said eagerly, "Ay, ay, Sir; but he who is born of God cannot commit sin. You will find this in the Scriptures, Sir. Answer *that*, if you please." "Well, well," I replied coolly, "be patient, and I will answer it immediately; but tell me, first, if you would call it sin, supposing a man, after his real or pretended conversion, to tell a lie, or to get drunk?" At first she seemed in great perplexity how to take this question; and, perhaps, if shame had not operated upon her, she would have boldly assumed, like the Puritans and Anabaptists of old, that the converted man might do what he would, without the guilt of sin; but not daring to go so far, she at length admitted, that it partook of the nature of sin. With such a partial admission, however, I was by no means satisfied; so I pressed her to say, fairly and openly, whether she considered it sinful, generally, to lie and get drunk. She allowed that she did. "Well then," I said, "if it be a sin to lie and get drunk, can it make any dif-

ference who they are who lie and get drunk? Will it be sin in one, and not in another?" She was obliged reluctantly to confess that sin was sin; and that the person committing the act could make no difference in the thing itself. "Very well," I continued, "then now go back to your text, and apply it to these liars and drunkards; and tell me, whether you think they are born of God, or of the devil. Remember it says, 'that he who is born of God does not commit sin.'"

She was staggered and confounded, and she wisely held her tongue, and spake nothing. But I determined, if possible, to make this matter still clearer and more irresistible to her by an example; so I said, "You know, I dare say, Mr. Perkins, the grocer." She answered that she knew him by name, but that she was not acquainted with him. "Well, but," I inquired, "you know him by sight as well as by name; do you not?" "Yes," she replied, "I have seen him sometimes." "Have you not seen him very often at Sion Chapel?" I inquired again. "Yes," she said, "he attends there certainly." "He is one of the converted; is he not?" I inquired once more. "He has gone through the new birth?" It is so said," she answered shortly and angrily. "Well then," I rejoined, "it is notorious throughout the whole parish, that he is perpetually in the ale-house, and drunk almost every day. Nor is Mr. Perkins the only instance of the same thing, as you very well know. What becomes then of their new birth? He who is born of God does not commit sin."

Here the older person being unable to extricate herself from the difficulty, of a younger one, whom I had remarked in the room, with a very sombre countenance, (occasioned, as I thought at first, by the melancholy scene before us, but which I now found to be the impression of her principles the true quinquarticular countenance) stepped in with a sort of filial duty, (and indeed she was the daughter of the other) and exclaimed, "Why, mother, if the gentleman looks through his own congregation, I dare say he will find some there who are ale-house-goers; ay, and people who have taken the sacrament too." The mother, relieved by this seasonable help, replied instantly, and rather triumphantly, "Yes, child, *that* he will; I know several of them; so he need not reproach *us* with that vice." "It is too true," I said, "and I am very sorry for it. We do not improve, any of us, by any means so fast as could be wished; the new man is not formed in us at once, and by one operation of the Holy Spirit. God gives that Spirit to us first at our baptism, and we want his aid daily; especially when we are old enough to engage in the business of the world. We shall then make many a slip, and without *him* we should not be strong enough to rise again from the fall. But to be perfect, as God requires us to be, we must get the habit of trying always to obey his commands; and habits

can only be got by doing the actions again and again. It is an absurdity, and a contradiction, to say that habits can be got at once. We do some act to-day, and we do it again to-morrow, and, perhaps, every day; and so at last it becomes habitual to us and a part of our nature, as it were. At first, too, it might have been difficult; but by being constantly repeated, at last it becomes quite easy. This is the way in which all the Christian graces and virtues must be acquired by us fallen creatures; and then, when we come, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to practise these virtues with ease, and almost naturally, we may truly be said to be new creatures; and thus we are what God wishes us to be, and ripe for our translation to heaven. But all this business is ten times more a work of labour to some people than to others, because those people have unhappily got the habits of particular vices; and they must cease to do evil, before they can learn to do well. They must retrace their steps, and break through those darling habits, by resisting them day after day, until they have quite mastered them. There must be much time, and much struggling, to do this effectually; and I should place more dependence on such a laborious change,—than on one reported to have taken place suddenly and all at once; because the one is a regularly-formed habit, and the other is, I know not what. With respect to the drunken members of my congregation, I hope, and believe, that they are in progress towards this rooted and steady change; and I advise them, by all means, to be constant at church, and in their attention to the public ordinances, with the view of drawing down God's blessing on their heads; and of being strengthened with greater might in the inner man; and of having their course towards sobriety made quicker, and shorter, if possible. And, if they can be brought to ratify their good wishes and resolutions and endeavours, at the altar of the Lord and Saviour, so much the better is it, and so much the more likely are they ultimately to succeed. But these men, meanwhile, make no pretensions to be better than their neighbours; they assume to themselves the distinction of no extraordinary conversions and new births; they are content to toil onward in the rugged, circuitous road of repentance and gradual reformation; and they know nothing of any short, broad cut to holiness. No; they are content, I say, to travel along the rough and narrow way; to advance inch by inch; and to conquer every difficulty by labour and trouble; and their vices, alas! will needs show themselves, in some shape or other, often and again, before they are utterly rooted out, and habits of the contrary virtues established in their room. I can sympathise, therefore, with these persons, when I see their darling sin, in some unlucky, unguarded moment of temptation, getting the better of their firmest resolves, and throwing them, perhaps, so far backwards in their journey; but, as to your converted

people, who boast so highly of themselves, and despise and condemn others, like the Pharisee in the parable, if they sin subsequently to their conversion, and habitually also, the world points justly at them with the finger of scorn, and calls them hypocrites, or mad. They are, indeed, hypocrites, if they pretended to a supernatural influence, which they knew that they never had; and they are crazy, if they fancy that they really had it."

I stopped here, and my adversaries also were silent. Without doubt they objected to much which I had said, and perhaps they did not understand the whole. But, as they did not seem inclined, or were unable to pursue the discussion, I took advantage of the pause, which placed me apparently on the superior ground, and addressed myself thus to the sick woman: "This conversation is for *your* profit. Believe me, no inward sensible operation, by which you may be assured at once of your salvation, is to be expected by you at all. You must not reckon upon it as necessary, nor torment yourself for the want of it. What is now most needful on your part, and at the same time very possible, with the spiritual help which is always ready at hand in the ordinary way, is a godly sorrow working repentance; sorrow that you have broken even one of the very least of God's commandments, and that you have failed of acquiring the degree of Christian perfection which he placed within your power; a sorrow, therefore, which will continually urge you on to new improvements of your character. The feeling of your present deficiencies should make you humble, indeed, but not desponding; it should make you fly to the merits of your Saviour, and repose in them; for the poor in spirit are they whom he promises to bless, and whom he will by no means cast off. Think of this when I am gone, and now let us conclude with the prayer which Christ himself has taught us." So kneeling down again, I repeated the Lord's prayer, in every petition of which she seemed sincerely to join with me; and then giving her the benediction, I rose, took my leave, and went down stairs, having beckoned to Mrs. Graves to follow me.

When we were come into the room below, "Mrs. Graves," I said, "this aunt and her daughter will do mischief, I fear, to your poor friend. They have possessed her with the idea, that she is desperately wicked, and that her soul is lost for ever, unless some sudden and violent change take place, which will at once assure her of her salvation. She cannot work herself up to this fanatic feeling, and, therefore, she believes, that she is in the situation which they describe to her. Thus they lay her more open to the temptations of the devil, and to the dreadful notion, that God has forsaken her. I hope that I have restored her to a little ease; but it will be a little only, if these same persons are always to be

about her. Depend upon it, it will end fatally. I should not wonder at all if she were to destroy herself." "God forbid, Sir," replied Mrs. Graves; "there is some danger of it, however. But, I think, after what you have said, she will not trust them, as she has been used to do." "Well," I said, "do not encourage them to come often to her, or to stay long with her at a time; and at all events persuade the poor woman herself to trust to *me* to do what is proper for her in respect to her religion. I will see her again very soon."

"I hope you will, Sir," she answered, "for I assure you, Sir, she is a very worthy woman, whatever her aunt may say, or think; and though you see her in this state of dejection, I am confident that she has no very bad sin to prey upon her thoughts, and to distress her so much. I have known her for several years, very intimately and a kinder-hearted creature there never was." "How did you first become acquainted with her?" I asked. "We were next-door neighbours, Sir," she replied, "before she was married. And when three of my poor children were down with the measles, she helped me to nurse them. She carried them in her lap by day, and she watched over them by night, and she was as good as a mother to them. God knows what I could have done without her! And she did every thing, Sir, without fee or reward, and without the expectation of any. I should be a wretch, if I were ever to forget it."

Mrs. Graves pronounced all this with great feeling, and when I had given her the commendations which I thought she well deserved, I inquired by what accident the sick person had become an inmate of her house; for I knew that it was not her practice to take lodgers. "Why, Sir," she answered, "I will tell you; Mrs. Whiston (for *that* is her name now) fell sick, after the birth of her second child; and you know, Sir, it was but right that I should attend upon *her* and her family, as she had attended upon mine.—But you see, Sir, how many sickly children I have of my own to look after; and poor Mrs. Whiston lived above half a mile from me; so that in spite of every thing that I could do, one of her children died; upon which I made all haste, Sir, to remove herself and the other here; and now the trouble is comparatively nothing." "Upon my word, Mrs. Graves," I said, "this charitable deed of yours may shame all the rest of us. But the husband, I hope, will repay you for your time and trouble, and for the use which he makes of your house. Your own family is now, I suppose, all shut up together at night in one bed-room?" "Yes, it is indeed," she answered. "But I should have thought little of *that*, if by any inconvenience and nursing I could have saved the other little child." "What, did it die here then?" I asked. "Yes, Sir,"

she replied, "more's the pity! But it was sickly from its birth, and the mother could not suckle it; and so God has taken it, Sir, to my great sorrow. But *he* knows best."

"Yes, indeed," I said, "he does; and in some cases we can see clearly, that what he has done, however painful to us, is for our profit; in all cases we ought to believe it. This poor child is delivered from much misery, which it could scarcely fail of meeting with in this world, being of a sickly constitution, and without the care and guidance of a mother." "True, Sir," she answered, "and the father being not one of the most sober or industrious, although Mrs. Whiston, in the kindness of her heart, softened down his conduct to you." "How then," I inquired, "will he repay *you*? Has he saved any thing?" "Not a farthing, Sir," she replied hastily, "and he has been out of work these two months; and his poor wife, when she was at home, sometimes wanted almost the common necessities." As she said this, the tears came into her eyes, and they burst from mine too; for now the full extent of this poor woman's charity was manifest to my view, and I could only exclaim, "God then will repay you, Mrs. Graves; God will repay you!" And so I hurried out of the house, conscience-struck, as it were, and recollecting, with a pang, in what numbers of opportunities presented to me by providence, my own charity had fallen below, far below, this standard. It might indeed well be so, for this was a deed indisputably of the very highest and noblest stamp of Christian charity; it was done without ostentation; it assumed to itself no glory; it looked for no praise or reward on earth. "Yet," I said to myself, as I walked along, "*it shall* be praised and rewarded on earth too, If I can do it. It *must* be made known abroad, that the rich may be awakened from their prodigal luxuries, and stimulated to a god-like employment of their wealth, when they see, as they may here, that poverty itself can lay up in heaven a greater treasure than their own. Here, in this humblest scene of life, is a shining pattern for the most exalted."

Arrived at home, I delighted Mrs. Warton with this story of true Christian love. We published it all around in the parish. A subscription was made, and the money deposited in the Saving Bank. Many days afterwards, when this was accomplished, I carried Mrs. Graves a book of account for her own private keeping, in which she saw inscribed the sum that was due to her, and placed at her command. "How is this, Sir?" she asked eagerly, and with a mixture of surprise and incredulity. In fact, I had merely put the book open into her hand, without entering into any explanation. My feelings were too full to attempt it at present. All I could do was to point with my finger at the words, which conveyed the necessary information; and when she had read them she exclaimed, "And is all this mine, Sir?" "It is all your own," I

stammered out; "you may do what you please with it." "Then I will keep it against a rainy day," she said, "if God should send me such a day; or it may lie till my children are old enough to be apprenticed to some trade. But, pray tell me, Sir, how, and for what it comes to me thus." "Your goodness," I said with difficulty, "your wonderful charity to the poor woman, Mrs. Whiston, has done this for you;" and without more words I hasted away, not daring to trust myself with her any longer.

She herself, however, was by no means content to let the matter rest here; so she came to my house and saw Mrs. Warton, who explained all the circumstances to her. "But, Madam," said this good woman, "I had no thought that what I did was more than common, and still less did I even dream of getting any thing by it. Well, I am greatly obliged to Dr. Warton and yourself, and to all the kind gentlefolks who have made me so rich for doing but an act of duty." With this she took leave. The money still remains in the Saving Bank, with all its accumulations of interest upon interest. Upon one occasion it cost her a great struggle to draw something out. Her husband being sick, and no wages coming in, she consulted me about it, and I advised her, by all means, to have recourse to the Bank, and to avail herself of the fund which a gracious Providence had laid up for her, that thereby she might preserve her family independent of the poor-rate. This argument overcame her reluctance, and she subtracted something, which was afterwards replaced, when her affairs were in a better state. But all this was long after the time of which I have been speaking, when Mrs. Whiston was lying sick in her house. I have anticipated events, to finish this part of my history.

My second visit to Mrs. Whiston was on the following morning after I first saw her, and in the meantime I had turned over no small number of sermons and treatises for information and help. Upon inquiring of Mrs. Graves, whom I found below, what sort of night she had passed, I was glad to hear that she had been much more composed than formerly. "Yet, Sir," she said, "the night did not go off without bringing the bad thoughts now and then. But she did not complain of them so bitterly as she has done at other times, nor did they appear to disturb her so much." "In what way," I inquired, "does she generally show her distress? You know that I have not seen it myself." "Why, Sir," she replied, "she turns her head from side to side as quick as possible, and sometimes with great violence; and when the fit is very bad, she screams out, and would tear her hair, if we did not prevent her." "And when she screams out," I inquired again, "does she ever say any thing that you can understand?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "she says a great deal which I understand, but for which I hope there is no reason. The drift of it all seems to be,

that God has forsaken her, that her name is not written in the book of life, and that the devil has already begun to torment her before her time." "Let us go up to her," I said; and immediately we did so.

We were let into the chamber by one of the three persons whom I had seen before, and who had been silent during the whole conversation. She was Mrs. Whiston's sister, and was alone with her. Mrs. Whiston herself was, as yesterday, in a state of perfect quietude, and continued so whilst I was with her. I had only seen her otherwise for a minute or two, when she was disturbed by the texts of Scripture which, no doubt, she had already heard her aunt repeating too often.

Having advanced close to the bed, I asked her if she was better. She shook her head, and said nothing. "The Doctor," I continued, "has not explained to me the nature of your bodily disorder (for I have not been able to meet with him;) but your mind, I hope, is in a more comfortable state." "A little, Sir," she said, "but what does it signify after all, whether I am better or worse, if God has left me?" "No, indeed," I answered, "if it were certain that God had left you, and also that he would not return, then all must be given up for lost. But neither of these things are even probable; so far are they from being certain. Has not Jesus Christ said, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest?' Has he not also said, 'ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you?' If therefore the divine providence had really forsaken you; yet, you see, it is to be recalled by praying earnestly for it. But what reason have you for supposing that God has deserted you? Are the bad thoughts your reason?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied, "they are my chief reason. If God had not forsaken me, the devil could not touch me." "This is not so clear," I said, "as you seem to think it; nor do we positively know that it is the devil who puts those thoughts into your head." "Not the devil, Sir, who does it?" she exclaimed; "I have seen him come into this room with my own eyes." "Well," I said, "I will not dispute that matter with you. Let it be supposed to be so; but it may not be true, nevertheless, that God has forsaken you. Do not you recollect that the devil afflicted Job with God's permission; and that God never really forsook him, but only seemed to do so for a season; and that he afterwards showed himself again evidently, by showering down blessings upon the holy man, when his trials were finished?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "I believe it was as you tell me." "Very well, then," I continued, "let this be a lesson of instruction for *you*. God is trying you, and it is a matter of no consequence whatever to you, whether the affliction be brought upon you by the devil, or

by any other means. Believe me it does not come without God, be it what it may; and so far from proving that God has deserted you, it proves, on the contrary, that he is watching over you for your good. If I saw you both wicked and prosperous, I should much rather say that God had forsaken you; but seeing you, as I do, in sorrow and adversity, and being assured to my satisfaction that you have been a pious and virtuous woman, according to your knowledge and station, I am confident that this is God's doing, and that it will turn out to your everlasting profit, if you hold fast your faith in Him."

"Ah! Sir," she replied with a trembling voice, "I wish I could: but my faith too often fails me in my distress." "Consider it in this manner," I said, "my poor sick friend; you are now calm and easy. But who gives you these intervals of ease and calmness?" She was silent; so I asked, "Is it not God himself?" This struck her, and she clasped her hands, and exclaimed, "it must be so, and I ought to thank him for it." "Undoubtedly," I rejoined, "you ought to thank him; and you see, if you do but think for a moment, you have a convincing proof that he has not forsaken you. Were the devil to exercise upon you, at his pleasure, all the rage which is natural to him, he would, no doubt destroy you, both body and soul, in a moment; but as this is not the case, it is plain that he acts under the control of a superior and gracious Being, who will not suffer you to be tempted above the strength which he gives you. He has declared himself, that whenever he permits his creatures to be tempted by the devil or otherwise, he will always make a way for them to escape, that they may be able to bear the temptation."

She did not answer, but it seemed by her countenance that a new light was breaking in upon her; so I tried again to make the whole argument still clearer to her, by beginning at a more distant point. "Listen," I said: "did it ever enter into your imagination to suppose, that God had forsaken you, because he placed you in an humble condition of life, and made you poor instead of rich?" "No indeed, Sir, never," she answered, "For then," I said, "you might well ask what is to be come of all the poor in all the world, who are so much more numerous than the rich? Would it not be both wicked and foolish to think for an instant that God had deserted them all, because they were poor?" "It would indeed," she replied. "Our Bibles tell us," I continued, "that the rich and the poor meet together, and that God is the maker of both; which means, that he made them both, not merely as they are both human beings; but that the riches of the one, and the poverty of the other, are equally ordained by God. He made the two stations, and he appoints whom he will to fill them; and in these stations he tries the tempers and the conduct of men,

to see whether the rich will use their riches aright, and the poor their poverty. But if they do this they will both alike get to heaven at last; and therefore what signifies it, whether men be rich or poor in this short life? A wise man choosing his station for himself, would choose *that* (would he not?) in which he would be liable to the fewest and least dangerous temptations?" "Yes, to be sure, Sir," she answered without hesitation. "Well," I said, "and are not the rich more exposed than the poor to many and great sins?" "I should think so, certainly, Sir," she answered as before. "Then," I continued, "upon this view of the matter, poverty is more desirable than riches; and it would be a strange thing to assert, that God had forsaken men because they were poor; whereas their very poverty, if they knew all, might be the strongest possible proof of God's goodness towards them." "It might, indeed," she said.

"Very well, then," I proceeded, "if you understand and feel all this, I will go one step farther. Are there not evils, which come alike to all descriptions of men?" "Yes, Sir," was her answer, "there is sickness, and the loss of dear relations and friends, and death, which spares none of us." "You are right," I said, "but you do not think, I presume, that God forsakes all those upon whom these evils come? Take sickness first, and I ask you, whether sickness may not be useful to great numbers of persons, to show them their own weakness, and their dependence upon God; to bring down all their proud and lofty thoughts; to chastise them, by pain, and suffering, and a more immediate fear of death, that they may seek after true wisdom and holiness; and to exercise them in all the most difficult virtues of contentment, patience, and resignation?" She granted it readily. "So then," I continued, "instead of thinking that God had forsaken the sick, you would be quite of a contrary mind, and say rather, that he was doing them a mighty good, by warning and correcting them in this life, in order to save their souls in the next; for the next life is every thing, and this life comparatively nothing?" "It is very true, Sir," she said, "and we all stand in need of being warned and made better." "Undoubtedly," I rejoined, "but suppose, if you will, a person so righteous as to want no warnings and no amendment. Might not God see fit to afflict such a person, for the example of others; that they may learn, what the faith of a Christian, fixed on the other world, will enable him to bear without murmuring and repining, and without shaking his trust and confidence in the divine goodness? Besides, God has so many good things in store for those who love and obey him, and who kiss the rod with which he scourges them, that he can make them a million times happier in heaven in proportion to their sufferings, or rather far beyond all proportion to their sufferings on earth. Do you understand and

believe all this?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "I understand it very well, now that you have explained it to me, and I have no doubt about it."

"I am glad to hear it," I said. "Tell me then next, whether you think it makes any difference what the sickness may be. If sickness in general be no proof that God has forsaken us, but quite the contrary, would any particular sickness, the most grievous imaginable, be a proof of it?" She hesitated; so I said, "Would fever, would inflammation, would consumption?" "No, Sir," she answered, "I see now that it makes no difference." "You are right," I said; "every disease alike is a messenger from God for our profit, be it gentle, or be it severe. Consider also again, whether it makes any difference in what way the disease may come. May not the disease come in a thousand different ways, and yet every way be ordained by God? Sometimes the disease follows the sin so naturally, that we are apt to overlook the hand of God, and to see and acknowledge his hand only when he inflicts the disease by some strange, surprising accident. But it is the same God, who has settled the unchanging course of natural things, and who controls and directs all the chances of human affairs. And may he not use, if he will, the wicked passions of one human being to afflict another?" "He may, certainly, Sir," she replied. "What think you then?" I inquired, "May he not use the devil also?" She made no answer, but seemed to be wrapt in a profound meditation: so I drew the conclusion, as if she had answered in the affirmative. "If then it were ever so certain, that the devil is the agent employed in afflicting any person; yet it would be equally certain, that the affliction comes from God, and is meant for the trial of that person. In short, under all circumstances, God's hand is over us; and it behoves us always to make the best of those circumstances, by looking up to him, and trusting in him, and praying to him for comfort and mercy."

She was still silent and contemplative. So far as this argument had gone, she might perhaps be convinced; but, no doubt, she had other reasons for thinking that God had forsaken her, upon which I had not yet touched; and, therefore, the painful persuasion was not eradicated. Here, however, I stopped for the present, hoping that I might be able, at the next opportunity, to probe the wound to the bottom, and to pour in the oil and wine that were necessary to sooth, or heal it. But, before I departed, I proposed to pray with her, to which she gladly assented.

I took the 13th, the 42nd, and the 43rd Psalms for my basis. In the 1st verse of the 13th, I altered the sentiment, that it might concur with my conversation, by saying, 'How long wilt thou seem to forget me, O Lord? How long wilt thou seem to hide thy face from me?' And this idea I closely attended to through-

out. In the 2nd verse, to the word 'enemies,' I gave the epithet 'spiritual.' In the 6th, I said, "I will sing of the Lord, because he will yet deal lovingly with me." I began the 42nd Psalm with the 6th verse, and followed it with the 7th; then I passed to the 10th; but I altered it to the future tense, and so went on to the end of the Psalm. The 43rd, I began with the 2nd verse, and, with slight alterations, it suited me very well throughout; and the effect produced upon my patient appeared to be great, and satisfactory. This being done, I repeated the Lord's prayer, the first prayer in the Visitation service, and the benediction at the end; and then I rose from my knees, and gently pressing her hand, took my leave.

Early on the next day the apothecary came to me in a great hurry, and wished me to lose no time in going to her. Whilst I was preparing myself with all possible speed, I questioned him as to the urgency of the matter, and he said, "Why, Sir, she has got the Devil in her head, I think, and so she wants a divine rather than a doctor. However, I cannot lay him by medicine, whatever you may be able to do by prayer." "But do you not suppose," I asked, "that her body is very much concerned in this disorder of her mind?" "She is bad enough, certainly," he replied, "and has been so ever since her last confinement; but I should not despair of her, even with all those symptoms of a decline about her, if it were not for this seeing, and dreaming, and talking so much of the devil." "Then, I fear, the poor woman is in a bad case," I said: "for unless her body be set right, I am morally certain, from what I have been reading on the subject, that she will always be liable to these mental paroxysms. She thinks, indeed, that the mental paroxysms were antecedent to the bodily disorder, and, perhaps, the cause of it; but the instances are so numerous, in which we know positively that they came with the disorder, and went away with it, I cannot help fancying there may be something of the same kind in the present case. However, I have so far ascertained, that she has been for some time troubled about her religion, and now it seems that her trouble amounts to a species of madness. God grant that it may not end in the same melancholy way, as it did with Mrs. Jenkins, whom you, perhaps, remember! I was sent for to attend upon her; but I found her absolutely raving, incapable of being reasoned with, incapable of prayer. In short, she was carried to a mad-house, where she laid violent hands upon herself. I conjectured, from the persons about her, and the scraps of sentences which she uttered, that some erroneous notions in religion had been preying upon her spirits. Poor Mrs. Whiston has taken up probably the same notions; but hitherto she has not lost the power of reasoning about them, and I hoped that I had removed some of them, by enlightening her ignorance, and expelling

her fears. But this fresh attack alarms me as to my ultimate success, unless you can do something for her body. At all events, my good Sir, we must go hand in hand together." "Undoubtedly," he answered; "I will lose no opportunity of helping her; but at this present moment nobody can do any thing but yourself. Mrs. Graves tells me that you have acquired a great authority over the poor woman; and perhaps your very appearance in the chamber may restore her to her senses." "Well," I said, "I am now ready, and I shall be with her in a few minutes. You shall hear the result. Whoever can relieve her, with God's blessing upon his endeavours, it will be a work of divine charity to do it."

I hastened away, and finding none but children below, I went softly up stairs, without being announced. Mrs. Graves and the sister were holding the sick woman's hands, one on each side of the bed, and she herself, with her eyes closed, was turning her head rapidly from side to side, without stirring her body. I had beckoned to the other women not to speak; so she was not aware of my arrival. I thought it desirable to hear what she might say, if perchance I could discover the exact notion which dwelt upon her thoughts, and led to the impieties and blasphemies, as I supposed them to be, which harassed and tormented her imagination. But after standing in silence for a considerable time, and not a single word being uttered, I was obliged to adopt another method; so I made a step or two which might readily be heard, and then said somewhat aloud, "Oh! our good Mrs. Whiston is asleep, is she? I hope she will be the better for it."

This, as I expected, roused her attention. She opened her eyes immediately, and ceased to move her head, and made an effort to sit up in the bed; upon which they loosed her hands, and lifted her upright, and heaped up pillows behind her back to support her. She was now apparently quite calm, and she said, "You are very kind, Sir, to come and see me. No, no, Sir, I was not asleep. The bad thoughts, Sir—the bad thoughts—they will not let me sleep. I have had no sleep the whole night." "Would to God, my poor friend," I exclaimed, "would to God, that I could be of any service to you! But you have no bad thoughts now, I trust." "Oh! yes, I have, Sir," she replied instantly, "they are not gone yet, and I fear they will hinder me from talking with you." "Try, however," I said, "to tell me what they are." She hesitated. I rejoined, "Tell me any one of them which you can mention with the least pain to yourself." She still hesitated; so I asked her, if it was like any thing which I had told her about Job. "Oh! yes, Sir!" she cried in agony, "very like, and many things much worse. I dare not speak them; they are fit only for the devil's ear."

She now became very uneasy, and I was fearful that I had pressed her too much. I said, therefore, in a gentle, soothing tone, "Well, never mind, my poor sick friend. I will kneel down and pray for you, and so will your sister, and kind Mrs. Graves." They were both in tears, but strove to hide them. I had in my pocket Dr. Stonehouse's prayer intended to be used by a person afflicted with a distemper of long continuance. It occurred to me, that, with a few slight alterations, it would suit me admirably; and it did so. But before I began, I bade Mrs. Whiston recollect, that the prayer which I was about to offer up was supposed to be spoken by herself in her own person, and not by *me*. She was now calm again, and all attention; so I read the prayer with a slow, solemn, and pathetic voice; master of myself to an unusual degree, and therefore making the most of it that I could, and marking, as I went along, the effect which every sentence produced.

As I proceeded she became more and more affected; and at that beautiful passage which begins with the words, 'I desire, in this poor condition of my health, to search and try my ways, and turn unto thee, O Lord,' she joined her hands together with fervour, and cast up her eyes towards heaven with a saint-like devotion. At the next sentence, which supplicates for the removal of her disorder, the tears chased each other down her cheeks. But when I came still nearer to her piteous case, and repeated the sentence, 'Support me, gracious Lord, that my soul may not be quite cast down, and too much disquieted within me,' she wept aloud, and exclaimed, again and again, "God help me! God help me!" At length I reached the noblest and most touching sentiment of all, which opens thus: 'If by this affliction thou intendest to bring me down to the grave, prepare me by thy grace for my removal hence;' and when I had finished it, still clasping her hands and weeping, she cried, "Ah! it is too late; it is too late; I am a vessel made for dishonour and destruction." The women were in an agony of grief at this dreadful ejaculation, which I pretended myself not to heed, but went on with the remainder of the prayer. As I hoped, it abated gradually the keenness of her feelings, and at length she grew again composed and tranquil.

To increase this effect, and observing her still intent to hear me, I now read the 27th Psalm, with the requisite alterations, to make it applicable to her case throughout. In speaking of the wicked, and of enemies, foes, and adversaries, I annexed such epithets as marked them to belong to the world of fallen spirits. The tenses I changed continually. Take the second verse for an example. I put it into the following form: 'When the wicked spirits, even mine enemies and my foes from the kingdom of darkness, come upon me to torment and destroy me, they shall stumble and fall.' Thus I arrived at the last verse: 'O tarry thou the Lord's leisure;

be strong, and he shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord.' This was so strikingly adapted to her circumstances, that when I had repeated it, "See," I said, "my good Mrs. Whiston, how the holy men of old were tried, like yourself, with the heaviest afflictions, as gold is refined in the fire; and see, also, with what patience they submitted to the divine chastisements, and with what firmness of resolution they rested in their God. These things were all written for *us* to study, that through the comfort of the Scriptures *we* might have hope."

I should have proceeded, but she interposed, and said, "Yes, Sir, they are very comfortable indeed. I am full of peace with hearing them; and I could almost hope that God might not finally cast me off, but that—" Here she paused, and I took up her broken sentence, "But that what? my poor afflicted creature. What is it that lurks in your mind, and outweighs all the comforts of Scripture, and all the reasonings of your friends? Yesterday, I think, you were clearly convinced that the bad thoughts were no proof of your being forsaken by your God; and the day before, I showed you that there was no need of any sudden or violent change of your heart and feelings, which your good aunt called conversion, to assure you that you were sealed for heaven. Were you indeed satisfied on these points?" "Indeed I was," she replied with earnestness, "and my aunt was not able to unsettle me again, when she talked with me last night; for she had no Scripture to prove her doctrine by. But ah! Sir, I fear she was too right in other things, which have haunted me ever since, and which alarmed me greatly when I heard them first at Sion Chapel." "And what were they?" I inquired eagerly; "let me know them. I am sure beforehand, by their effects, that they must be erroneous, or that you yourself have made some mistake about them. Happy will it be for you if you can lay open your whole mind before me, and thus enable me to clear away all the misconceptions of God and your religion, which otherwise, perhaps, will hasten you to an untimely grave."

Encouraged by this, she asked me, but with trembling, whether God had not settled in his own mind, from the beginning, who should be saved and who should be lost for ever. "Suppose," I said, "that he had done so, what has *that* to do with *you*?" "Why, Sir," she answered, shuddering, "I may be one of those whom he has determined to destroy." "Yes," I rejoined, "but you cannot know *that* beforehand; can you?" "My aunt, Sir," she replied, "and our ministers at Sion Chapel, always say, that the new birth will make it known to us, and that God will call us in some sudden and unexpected manner, by means of the Holy Ghost coming upon us. But I never could understand this, Sir; and I am sure that I never had any of the feelings about which

they talk so much ; and *that*, Sir, was one great cause of my fears." " Well," I said, "*that* cause of your fears is now at an end. I have taught you, and you have taken it upon my word and upon my reasonings, that no such feelings are necessary, or to be expected by wise and sober people; that the only sure testimony of your being in the favour of God is the testimony of your own conscience, bearing witness within you, when you examine yourself, that you are striving to the utmost to keep all God's commandments, and that you put your trust for the rest in the merits of your blessed saviour, Jesus Christ. The Gospel tells us, over and over again, and always in the most decisive manner, that persons under those circumstances shall undoubtedly be saved. If this then be your case, as I really believe it to be, you need not trouble yourself about any decrees which God may be supposed to have made in the beginning; it matters not at all to *you* in any way, because you have those marks about you, which show you to be one appointed to salvation. Do you clearly understand my meaning?"

" Yes, Sir," she replied, " I think I do; but I have not so favourable an opinion of myself, as you are kind enough to have, upon the report of that best of friends, Mrs. Graves ; and might I not fall, Sir, from such a state, if I were really in it?" " Certainly you might," I answered, " and it is most likely that you would, if you trusted in your own strength to keep you upright." "*That* I do not," she exclaimed, interrupting me. " Very well, then," I said ; " but let us suppose for a moment, that, by being less cautious and vigilant, you relapse into a course of sin; that you become a liar, a thief, a drunkard, an adulteress." " God forbid, Sir," she cried with horror, " God forbid that I should ever commit such crimes!" " No, indeed," I said, " I do not think that you ever will ; but only suppose it, that I may explain the doctrine to you. What would you do in such a case? You ought to consider with yourself, that, if it be true that God has appointed some persons to dishonour and destruction from the very beginning, it is too likely that such as you would then be, and, continuing such, must be, amongst the number of them; because the Bible says plainly, that the wages of sin is death; death temporal and death eternal, which is far worse. Finding yourself then on such a precipice, and in danger of falling into the bottomless pit, what are you to do? Not to plunge into the depths of despair, and to do nothing else than to torment yourself with the notion that you are condemned already, and that there is no help for you; but, on the contrary, to fly back from the precipice with all possible speed, and to take every step prescribed by the Gospel for your recovery; first, to be sorry and indignant with yourself for offending your God and Saviour; then, like the prodigal son, to acknowledge your own baseness and wickedness; and, lastly, to return, as he

did, into the forsaken paths of piety and virtue. And have you not the greatest encouragements to try to act in this manner? Did not Christ die to reconcile sinners to God? Does not God himself see the penitent and returning sinners, whom he has first stirred with his grace; does he not see them, whilst they are yet afar off, and run forth, as it were, to meet them with open arms, and to fall upon their necks, and kiss them with the kiss of peace? And does he not also, afterwards, at their earnest desire, send his Holy Spirit to assist their repentance, so as to carry it on to an effectual reformation of their hearts and lives? Well, then, proceeding in this manner, and with this mighty help, you may again regain your ancient state; you may perceive again growing up about you the same marks which you had before of your being in favour with God; and perhaps also you may feel now a double abhorrence and detestation of all sin. I say, therefore, that, if so, you are born of God; that you are in a renewed state of salvation; that you are of the description of those who are predestined to eternal life. What signifies this doctrine, then, to *you*, Mrs. Whiston, that it should scare you with dreams, or keep you waking both night and day? If you were an unrepentant and incorrigible sinner, the doctrine might well scare and terrify you; but as you are the contrary, it ensures to you the certainty of future everlasting happiness."

"God grant it!" she exclaimed, her face beaming with a joy to which she had been long a stranger, "God grant it! You have taken a dark cloud from my eyes, and a heavy load from my breast, Sir. Blessings on your head!" Her gratitude deeply affected me, but I proceeded thus, in order that I might put her upon her guard against any thing which her aunt and cousin might say, to disturb the present explanation. "I am delighted, my poor friend, that I have been able to give you so comfortable a view of this doctrine; and to convince you, that you have nothing to do with it, except to believe firmly, that the promises of Scripture, through Jesus Christ, shall certainly be made good to every faithful Christian. But I will tell you fairly, that, if you were absurdly to consider the doctrine by itself, as too many do, and apart from those gracious promises of the gospel to the humble, the penitent, and the faithful, it would appear to be a very uncomfortable doctrine, indeed; but, under such a limited view, it must directly lead to such bad effects, as to give good reason for supposing that it cannot be a true doctrine. Here, therefore, what I have further to explain about it."

Upon this she prepared herself to listen to me with a most earnest and fixed attention, and said, "Thank you, Sir! thank you a thousand times! I shall be most glad to hear it further explained; for I cannot get rid of the idea, that my fellow creatures are deeply

concerned in it, whatever may be my own case." "Yes, indeed," I rejoined hastily, and with admiration of the sentiment; "our fellow-creatures are greatly interested in it; and what is more, God himself is greatly interested in it; and, if it were true, we should have some difficulty to justify his goodness, his justice, and his wisdom, with the help of all the faculties which he has given us. I put the doctrine then thus, that you may have it in the very shortest compass, and stript of every thing else which might disguise it, and occasion it to be less clear to your understanding. God, before he made the world, settled and determined, once for all, and for ever whom he would save, and whom he would damn, without any respect whatever to what any individual person might be, when it came to the lot of that person to live upon the earth; so that do what we might, or be we what we may, it matters not at all; there is no help for it; we shall be saved or damned, according to that ancient, original determination, fixed irrevocably and unchangeably before a single man was created or born. Do you comprehend this?"

"Too well," she answered immediately, "and it makes me shudder at it." "So it may, with reason," I replied; "but consider first, what the effect of such a doctrine must be upon any man who believes it. He may say to himself, 'God has determined, before I was born, what is to become of me at last; what I do, therefore, is of no consequence whatever; I cannot alter God's decree; nothing on my part can either hinder it, or help to bring it to pass: if I am to be saved, I shall be saved; if I am to be damned I shall be damned. I will live, therefore, as I like; I will snatch every pleasure for which I have an appetite; I will follow the bent of every passion; I will satisfy every lust; I will give the reins to every desire or imagination which comes uppermost; I will drink, rob, fornicate, murder; nothing shall stand in my way to stop the gratification of my wishes.' Well, if the man reasons thus, I do not see what answer could be made to him. But it is likely that we should all reason in the same; manner; and then you may readily conceive what a world this would be—fit only for the devils themselves to inhabit—a hell, indeed, upon earth."

"So it would, Sir," she said, looking very thoughtfully, and pondering something in her mind, which occasioned me to pause in my argument longer than I had intended—"so it would indeed," she repeated; "but I am considering another case, where a person having a better nature than such as you have just described, and abominating all those crimes, and assured that a God of goodness must love goodness in others, and, therefore, endeavouring, to the very utmost of his knowledge and strength, to do what he supposes to be pleasing to God—what must happen, Sir, if this person be condemned already by that shocking decree?"

I could scarcely conceal the satisfaction which this question gave

me. She had stated, I believe, precisely her own case. However, it was a home-question, and most fully to the point before us. My answer was, that, if God loved goodness, and therefore could not punish it without a contradiction to himself, he must ordain, that this person should fall into the habit of some grievous sin, and die in it. "So then," she interrupted me with quickness, "you make God to be the cause of the man's wickedness, in order that, when he punishes it afterwards, he may seem to be just?" "Even so," I said; "but as you very well suggest to me, he would only seem to be just; at least, if justice be what *we* mean by the word; and if it be any thing else, it is vain for us to talk or think about it."

Mrs. Whiston's anticipation had advanced us miles upon our road; so I continued immediately. "To impute such conduct to God would be monstrous, impious, blasphemous; and therefore, the doctrine which leads to this consequence cannot be true." "It cannot, Sir, it cannot," she repeated with emphasis. "Well, then," I said, let us now call in Scripture to help us. The first text, which occurs to me, is *that* which informs us, that all effectual religion and goodness in men are impossible, unless they believe that God is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him. This is the language of plain, common sense, as well as of Scripture: it agrees with all our best notions of the divine goodness, wisdom, and justice; and no doctrine can be true, which is not capable of being reconciled with it. Is it possible, then, so to modify, or qualify, or explain the doctrine, about which we have been talking, as to make it correspond with this? Very easily, I think. For we have only to suppose that God adapted his decrees to the conduct of men, which he perfectly well foreknew; so as to determine to reward those who in all after-ages should diligently seek him, and to punish the rest who should disobey his calls to repentance, and do despite to the spirit of grace. Do you see any difficulty in this?" "No, Sir," she answered, "none whatever." "If," I resumed, "the decree be supposed to be general, that God will save or condemn all who act in such or such a manner, there is really and truly no difficulty in comprehending it; but if it apply to, and embrace, every individual human being, individually considered, there may, perhaps, be some difficulty to comprehend it in all its bearings. However, in practice, the difficulty vanishes. Suppose two brothers, being born into the world under exactly the same circumstances, with respect to the possibility or probability of their being good or bad Christians. Well, we will suppose also that God foresaw, from the beginning, that the same discipline, by judgments and mercies, and the same assistance of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to them, would not have the same effect upon both: in short, that the eldest would attend to all the divine warnings, and

profit by the divine help; but that the youngest would despise or neglect them all, and continue to walk according to his own corrupt imaginations: might not God, upon the foresight of this decree in his own mind, without any violation of goodness, wisdom, or justice, that the youngest at the last judgment shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the eldest into life eternal?"

"To be sure he may, Sir," she replied without hesitation; "for you know, Sir, God does not make his decree, and then cause that youngest brother to be what he turns out to be, in spite of all his wishes to be a different sort of man; but, on the contrary, God disposes every thing by his providence in such a manner, that the youngest, as well as the eldest, might become a good Christian, and then, foreseeing that the youngest will ruin himself wilfully, he makes the decree." "You are quite right," I said, "you comprehend the matter thoroughly; there needs not another word on the subject, and we come to what I said in our first conversation. Scripture points out certain marks of these two opposite states, the plainest imaginable; and we have nothing to do individually, but to look to those marks, and see in which state we are, and to endeavour to get into the right one, if we are not in it already. No dependence must be placed on any thing else. Your aunt's dependence on conversion and the new birth is worse even than a broken reed. For, if a man could work himself up to think, which many unfortunately for themselves have done, that there is a decree in his favour, although he produces no fruits of righteousness, you may reasonably fear that he never will try to produce any. He will most probably be puffed up in his own vain imagination; despise the rest of his brethren, as if they were reprobates; and so, like Mr. Perkins and too many others, plunge himself into damnable sins. Let us, therefore, carefully guard against such a delusion, and pray to God to keep us steadily in the love and fear of him, and in strict obedience to his will. Think of these things, my good Mrs. Whiston, when you meditate on your condition. And now, God bless you, and farewell for the present." So I left her.

The apparent result of this day's visit sent me home with a light heart and a joyful countenance. It seemed strikingly evident, that great progress had been made towards the restoration of peace and tranquillity of mind to this afflicted woman. Mrs. Graves called in the evening, and said that all was going on prosperously, except the bodily complaint. It remained, however, to be seen how she would bear another visit from her aunt.

The same evening I saw the apothecary. He had been with Mrs. Whiston, and had found her as calm as possible. The bad thoughts had not returned since my conversation with her in the morning. "Perhaps," I said, "if she were left to you and me

alone, with Mrs. Graves and her sister to nurse her, we might do something, with God's blessing, to compose and tranquillize her mind permanently; you might administer your medicines with effect to the body, and I mine to the soul. I had, I believed, already rooted out some painful notions which were taken up on erroneous grounds, and this morning I have perhaps rooted out some more. But the experience of this day has shown me, that I have a great difficulty to contend with. She has an aunt and a cousin who are Calvinistical Methodists, as I suppose; and their visit to her last night, I am pretty confident, was the main cause of an aggravated attack of her mental disorder. It was evident, from what passed with myself, that they had been talking to her upon the deepest points of divinity, which were well calculated to disturb and confound her. In short, I should expect now, that her disorder will ebb and flow in proportion as I and they converse with her; and that whatever good I may do her for a time will certainly be lessened, if not entirely overthrown, by *them* afterwards; or, at least, that they will be constantly stirring up in her mind new doubts and misgivings about her salvation, which will require much pains on my part to dissipate. Would it not be wise, therefore, for *you* to order that she should be kept as quiet as possible, seeing but few persons, and talking with none? Her aunt, no doubt, has a good object in view, and wishes to save her poor niece's soul; but how this is to be done by the preposterous method which she is pursuing, I cannot understand. Would you recommend predestination and conversion as proper subjects to be continually impressed upon a mind already crazed with 'bad thoughts?' Predestination and conversion, too, not as we explain them, but as Calvinists and Methodists explain them? She cannot be wrought to any fanatical raptures and extasies, the only test, as they tell her, of her election to life; and therefore very naturally, and almost necessarily, she sinks into a religious melancholy; she is dejected, she desponds, she despairs."

"No wonder, indeed, Sir," replied Mr. Benson, "and it is certainly necessary to do what you recommend. I will see about it. But may I ask, Sir, in what way you have talked with her, so as to produce her present serenity?" "Why, I have talked with her," I said, "upon her own supposition, that the devil himself is personally her tormentor." "Then I must adhere to the same supposition," he answered. "Yes," I said, "for the present, if you find it necessary to mention the subject; but then I have taught her to draw a different conclusion from it than she has been used to do. She thought it to be a proof that God had forsaken her; that her name was not written in the book of life; and that her sufferings were the beginning of the punishments of the damned. But I have shown her, by reasoning which she was

very capable of understanding; and by the particular instance of Job, that God might employ any instrument for the correction or trial of his creatures, and any sort of disease; and that her bad thoughts must be considered in no other light than as a disease, which, like every other, was under the control of God. Indeed, I fully believe that her bad thoughts are, strictly speaking, a disease, and will yield to the power of medicine; especially now that she is more easy as to her prospects in the next world. For I hope she is at present quite satisfied about these terrible doctrines, and will be prevented from hearing any thing more about them; and if you can but give her a little strength, I do not despair of being able to weed out of her mind even the idea that the devil has been visible to her, and consequently that he is the immediate author of her sufferings. Her confidence that she has seen him I take to be a mere dream of the disordered imagination; and if she can be persuaded of this, I am sure that, with the return of bodily health, it will go a great way towards the complete establishment of her tranquillity. I beseech you therefore, my good Sir, to co-operate with me with all your skill and attention; and, above all, to give a strict order that nobody may be permitted to talk with her on religious subjects but myself."

"I see now clearly," said Mr. Benson, "that it is necessary to place some restriction upon her ill-judging relations; and with respect to her body, besides the medicine which I will give her, I know of nothing so likely to be useful as fruit, if it can be had." "It can be had very easily," I replied; "not indeed out of my own garden just at the present, but from Mr. Cornwall's, where it abounds. It happens too, very luckily, that I shall see Mr. Cornwall this very evening, and I will mention it to him." Upon this Mr. Benson left me.

Mr. Cornwall was a rich young clergyman, living at one of the best houses in my parish. He was already acquainted with the case, and had contributed secretly (for it was all a secret as yet) towards the recompence of Mrs. Grave's good deed of charity. He promised at once to supply the poor woman with as much fruit as might be proper for her, and also to carry it to her himself; which he did continually, and now and then, at my request, he prayed with her. I mention this the rather, because it gives me an opportunity of reminding the clergy how useful it is, especially under peculiar circumstances, to converse as well as to pray with the sick. This poor woman always seemed to me to derive great benefit from my prayers, but still more from my conversation; and as Mr. Cornwall, out of delicacy to *me*, never conversed with her, but simply repeated the prayers in the Visitation-service, she told Mrs. Graves that *my* visits were the most comfortable to her, and that she hoped I would come as often as possible.

When I learnt this, and found also that the bad thoughts began to be of rarer occurrence and less distressing, I determined to avail myself of so favourable a juncture, and try to extirpate the main idea which had so long disturbed her. Sitting, therefore, by her bed-side, one day, very soon after the last conversation, her sister only being present, after having prayed with her, I said, "My good Mrs. Whiston, what do you suppose to be the devil's great object in going to and fro in the world, as the Scriptures represent him to do?" She hesitated to answer: so I continued "Is it not said also in Scripture, that he goeth about, seeking whom he may devour?" "I believe it is Sir," she replied. "But what is meant by his devouring people?" I asked "can it be any thing else but tempting them to commit sin, that, if possible, he may make them wicked, like himself, and bring them at last to the same terrible place of punishment?" "*That* must be it Sir, I dare say," she exclaimed eagerly. "Well, then," I asked again, "do you suppose the devil to be very shrewd, and subtle, and cunning?" "Yes, indeed, Sir," she answered, with still more eagerness, "*that* I do, above all others in the world," "Then," I said, "if he be so, he will always understand what is most proper to gain his object, will he not? He will understand, that is, what temptations are most suitable to the temper and disposition of each particular person; and by leading men, as the case may be, into those very temptations, he will be more certain of success in trying to effect their ruin. Is not this so?" "It is most likely," she replied. "If, for instance," I thus continued, "a man be too fond of money, would not the devil, seeing such a fair opening for temptation, be always suggesting to that man the expediency of getting as much money as he could; of hoarding it up closely, without expending it upon himself or others; and if honest means failed, would he not urge him to have recourse to dishonest ones, in order to gratify this avaricious passion?" "I suppose so," she answered. "Do you think," I said, "that the devil would ever put it into this man's head to perform acts of charity which would cost him any thing?" "No, indeed," she replied. "Because," I said, "acts of charity, in the first place, would be a proper employment of the man's wealth, and therefore contrary to the devil's own interest; and, secondly, the man being so covetous, and his whole soul bent upon the possession of money, if the devil tempted him the contrary way, namely, to spend his money, this would show a great want of that cunning in the devil which we justly suppose to belong to him; would it not?" "It would Sir, to be sure," she answered. "Well," I continued, "and if a man was too fond of drinking, the devil, intent upon his proper business, would be always putting into this man's head the deceitful pleasures which spring from that vice; the mirth, the song,

the idleness, the freedom from care, the forgetting of troubles; and would also contrive expedients to throw him perpetually into the way of companions fond of the excesses of jollity and revelry; would he not?" "No doubt of it, Sir," she replied. "But," I rejoined, "he would never tempt the man to be sober; because sobriety being the man's own interest, could not be the interest of the devil." "Very true, Sir," she answered. "Besides," I said, "even supposing sobriety to be a bad thing for the man, yet it would not show any shrewdness in the devil to tempt him to a thing most contrary to his nature, and in which the devil himself was so little likely to succeed; is not all this so?" "I understand you very well, Sir," she replied; "and I agree with you in every thing."

"We are come then to this," I said, "that the devil never tempts men to do what is right, but always to do what is wrong—to follies, to vices, to sins; and not all men to all follies, vices and sins, indiscriminately and at random; but each individual according to his individual propensity: the sensual man to gluttony, drunkenness, or lust, as it may happen; the covetous man to extortion, oppression, and every sort of injustice, to multiply his gains; and so in like manner with respect to the rest of the vices. So far you understand. Well, suppose now, that this Evil Spirit, subtle as he is, should make a mistake, and tempt any person to something towards which he has no inclination whatever; nay, to something which that person utterly abhors; and suppose that he shows this abhorrence more and more under every fresh trial of the thing, whatever it may be; do you think that the devil would proceed with so hopeless a temptation, and not rather betake himself to another plan more promising of success?" "There is no doubt," she answered, "but that he will try something else." "But, perhaps," I said, "we have supposed too much in supposing that he will ever be mistaken. Although he may not succeed at all times and with all persons, is it not most likely, and have we not already allowed, that he will always have recourse to the most probable means of corrupting and ruining every individual whom he assails?" "Indeed, Sir," she replied, "I fear it must be so." "Well then," I continued, "if we saw a person actually assailed by some perplexing and distressing temptation—by sickness, suppose, or any other affliction—but so far from yielding to the temptation, or committing any sinful act in consequence of it, that this same person detests and abominates the very thought of murmuring and repining and of falling into any sin to which the affliction might seem most liable; and prays to God, and tries all human means, to expel every thought for ever; and yet it continually recurs; day after day; and is renewed and repeated for months and months together,

should we not reason with ourselves, and conclude, that this could never be the work of the devil, unless he were one of the most foolish of beings, whereas we know him to be one of the shrewdest and most cunning? Have we not agreed, too, that when the devil has any hand in a temptation, he always fixes upon something to which the tempted person is inclined by nature, or custom, or accident; and that if it were possible for him to be mistaken in what he fixed upon, he would by no means continue the same temptation for a long period, and without the slightest hope of success?"

Here she hesitated to answer, and appeared to be pondering the matter deeply in her own mind, as if she began to suspect that the argument touched her own case, and therefore that there was some error in it; for that the devil was her tempter she had never doubted for an instant; so I proceeded in this manner: "Whenever you perceive certain marks in a temptation, such as we have described before, and certain sins following the temptation, would you not be justified in thinking that the devil was concerned in it?" "I suppose so," she said. "Well," I continued, "and if you perceived none of those marks about the temptation, and what is more, no sins following it, would you still ascribe it to the devil; and so not only make him lose his labour, which I hope he often does, but also, which is more extraordinary, make him do things contradictory to his nature and interest, which are quite useless with respect to the furtherance of his kingdom of darkness, and which betoken folly instead of subtlety?" "I should not have done so," she replied, "if I had not been in my present wretched state.—My bad thoughts must come from *him*." "What?" I asked, "when the bad thoughts are no sins in themselves, and lead to no sins whatever? For you told me, that you neither encouraged them to come, nor approved of them when they did come. On the contrary, it is self-evident, that you would keep them out of your head, if you could; and that you hate them to the very uttermost. Then again, instead of producing sin, they seem to me only to make you more averse from it, and more desirous of God's help and mercy. If at times you have doubted of the Divine mercy, that has been chiefly an error of ignorance, and the consequence of your having been taught those terrible doctrines about which we have talked so much. I cannot understand, therefore, what the devil has gained, or is likely to gain, by this temptation; but I am almost certain, on the other hand, that you yourself have been indirectly improved by it. So then, upon the whole, I think that you would be right in concluding, that the devil has nothing to do with it."

I am not sure that she quite comprehended the whole of this reasoning, although I took great pains to state it clearly, and put it at

much greater length than it appears here; turning it about into various shapes, and endeavouring to make all the ground good, as I went along. However, the earnestness of my manner, and the deference which she paid to my authority, produced a desirable effect to a certain degree; but it perplexed her to account for the circumstance of her having seen, as she was confident that she had done, the devil himself. At length, therefore, she said, "But why then, Sir, did he come to me at all, if it were not to put these bad thoughts into my head?" "He might have come to you," I replied, "for some other reason, without being the cause of your bad thoughts. But might you not possibly be mistaken in supposing that he came to you?" "If a person who has seen may be mistaken," she answered with quickness; "you know, Sir, that I told you I had seen him." "I recollect that you did so," I said: "but persons so ill in body as you have been, sometimes in great pain, sometimes drowsy and slumbering, often brooding over uncomfortable opinions in religion, know very little indeed of what passes around them. And there is another thing; do you not dream now and then, when you are sleeping or dozing?" "Always, Sir," she replied, "almost always; and the dreams break my sleep continually." "As much lately as they did before?" I inquired. "Not so much," was her answer. "And in your dreams," I inquired again, "did you not often fancy that you were wide awake?" "Very often," she said. "So, then," I rejoined, "it might have been in one of those dreams, when you fancied yourself wide awake, that you also fancied yourself to have seen the devil. But tell me under what appearance did you suppose that you saw him?" "As he is generally described, Sir," she said. "What," I asked, "in some horrible shape?" "Yes," she answered, "so horrible, as to terrify me very much." "That is just what I should expect, if it happened in a dream," I said, "but it would be very extraordinary, indeed, if it were a real appearance; for I cannot imagine how his appearing in a terrifying manner could further his purpose of leading you to sin. On the contrary I can see clearly, that the showing himself so must defeat his own object; because the tempted person would put himself immediately upon his guard, and fly with horror from the most distant approach of the very least sin. Do you think that the covetous man, of whom we talked a little while ago, or the drunkard, would plunge deeper into their vices, if the temptation to do so were accompanied with the sight of the tempter himself, in one of his dreadful forms, and, consequently, bringing home to their imagination the place from which he comes, and the intolerable punishments to which he himself and all his wicked followers are doomed for ever?"

This idea seemed to flash the conviction upon her, that she might indeed have been deceived in her supposition; and accordingly she said at once, that, after what I had stated to her, she thought it much more likely, that he would appear in some pleasing shape, and carefully conceal who he was. "Very true," I rejoined, "and, therefore, with the view of admonishing us to be always on our guard, the Scripture informs us, that he sometimes changes himself into the shape of an angel of light. Why, you know, that in the foolish stories, which we might have read, when we were children, about his appearing to different persons, they always represented him as endeavouring to hide his deformities; and, when he made himself suspected by his conversation, and a search took place to discover who he might be, then those deformities were found, and he was in consequence immediately cast out, before his glosing lies and seducing insinuations had done any mischief. So far, indeed, those old stories were not foolish, but wise; and we may learn something useful from them. Tell me then, my good Mrs. Whiston, what do you think about it now?"

"Why, Sir," she answered, "I think that what you say is very reasonable; and my only difficulty is, from whence these bad thoughts can come; and they come too so suddenly, and so unexpectedly." "This may very well be," I said, "without the devil having any thing to do with them. Have not good thoughts also sometimes come into your mind suddenly and unexpectedly, when you were not doing or saying any thing that could have led to them?" "It is very true," she answered. "And have not very strange thoughts, neither good nor bad, occurred suddenly and unexpectedly?" "Often, Sir," she replied. "Then," I said, "we need not trouble ourselves any further about the suddenness and unexpectedness of the thoughts. It proves nothing as to their cause. All sorts of thoughts come and go, we know not whence, nor how, nor where. We have only to pray, and strive, that the bad ones do us no harm."

"I will do both," she exclaimed, "with all the strength that God may give me. But such bad thoughts as mine, Sir, must come from the devil alone, after all." "I have already given you," I said, "very good reasons to prove that they do not come from *him*, and our not knowing from what other quarter they come would be a very bad reason for concluding that *he* sends them. But I will tell you something about it, which may, perhaps, comfort you." "Do, Sir," she cried eagerly, "do, by all means."

"Well then," I said, "since I became acquainted with your distressing case, I have inquired into the matter; and I find that it is considered to be a disorder, like any other disorder; and that it is not at all an uncommon one; and that, although capable of be-

ing cured by medicine, it has now and then turned out to be incurable; never entirely leaving the afflicted person, until death put an end to it. Do not be alarmed at this. Should it happen to *you*, I advise you to disregard it altogether, if you can do so, as I think you may, after the conversation which has passed between us on the subject; but at all events I advise you to pay as little attention to it as possible: for then, perhaps, these bad thoughts, painful as they have been to you before, and still continuing to come, will occasion you but little trouble in future. However, I find besides, that this disorder seldom attacks any but those who are in a bad state of bodily health, and that it is heard no more of when bodily health is restored. Mr. Benson, therefore, I hope, with God's blessing, will restore yours, and then we shall see you happy again."

The poor woman shook her head significantly, and made no remark as to the recovery of her health; but she reminded me, that the bad thoughts preceded her bodily disease. "So you think," I said; "but I am told, that your bodily health had visibly declined, before the particular disease affecting it was apparent; and my information as to bad thoughts goes to this point also, that they are very closely connected with religious troubles—you have had such troubles. Now if your health began to decline, and these troubles in religion to harass you about the same time, and then came the bad thoughts; does not this explain every thing? But I must be gone. God bless you!" Thus I left her.

This conversation had turned out very much according to my wishes, and for a few days things went on as smoothly as possible. The bad thoughts came indeed during that interval; but, fortified as she now was with more knowledge and faith, she did not suffer them to prey deeply upon her spirits. Her health, however, did not amend; and the apothecary thinking her recovery extremely doubtful, I employed myself chiefly in preparing her for death. It was at this time that I administered the sacrament to her, which she had never before received; and she assured me that, if God should be so gracious as to spare her life, she would receive it regularly in future at the altar of her parish church, and conform to the established religion of her country in all things.

In the midst of all this I was sent for one afternoon by Mrs. Graves, and I was desired to come to Mrs. Whiston with as much haste as I could, because she was in great suffering. Paley's volume of religious tracts was lying by me when I received the message, so I snatched it up, and speeded away.

Arriving at the house, I found Mrs. Graves waiting for me below, to admit me, and to explain the state of affairs. "The aunt, Sir," she whispered immediately in my ear, "Mrs. Whiston's aunt is up stairs with her; and I fear, as you foretold too truly, she has done no little mischief." "Why did you let her go up?"

I inquired hastily. "Why, Sir," she answered, "having orders from the doctor and yourself to keep her away as much as possible, I have refused her permission to go up very often, in spite of the most urgent entreaties, and of her complaining that she was used hardly in not being allowed to see her own dying niece. But to-day I could not refuse any longer, because Mrs. Whiston herself began to be unwilling to occasion her aunt so much unpleasant feeling, and also thought that she might see her now with perfect safety. However, Sir, she was mistaken; and unhappily she is at this moment suffering for her mistake by a very painful attack of her bad thoughts." "Let me know," I said, "as quick as you can, what it was that appeared to *you* to cause them, and perhaps I shall be better prepared for the scene above." "It was the old story, Sir," she replied; "scarcely was her aunt seated upon a chair by her bed-side, but she began to inquire about her religious state; and I was in great hopes for a long while that Mrs. Whiston would have borne it very well, but at last she talked so uncomfortably about the few that were to be saved, and the vast numbers whom God would pass by and leave to their doom, that my poor friend became dreadfully affected, and I sent immediately for you, Sir." "This aunt is very indiscreet," I said, "and very cruel although probably without meaning it;" and by this time I was upon the stairs.

The door of the sick chamber being open, I saw the poor woman before I entered it. She betokened her distress by the quick movement of her head from side to side, as on former occasions, and her eyes were shut. The other women were standing on the farther side of the bed, observing her. Thinking therefore to rouse her attention, and to divert it suddenly from the bad thoughts which at present were in possession of her mind, I exclaimed as I passed the threshold, in a solemn tone, 'Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it.' She opened her eyes at the well-known voice, and gave me a most piteous look, and the tears started forth; but her peace was not at once restored. If I judged rightly, there was also in her look a little mixture of anger with herself for having suffered the agitation to prevail so far; nevertheless she could not shake it off immediately. Not a word did she utter.

Being aware of her condition, and seeing that conversation was hardly possible, I said, 'Let us pray;' and then kneeling down I opened Paley at page 467, and began Mr. Jenks's prayer for one under deep melancholy and dejection of spirit. It suited her case extremely well, and she listened to it earnestly; the consequence of which was, that her tranquillity was nearly restored by the time that I had finished it. Next came a prayer of Bishop Patrick's, which was equally suitable; and at page 474 one of Mr.

Kettlewell's. When these were finished, she was become quite calm so I rose and read the 103rd Psalm, as a sort of thanksgiving for the ease which she now enjoyed. In that sence she understood it; and when I paused after the last verse, she repeated herself aloud the concluding sentence, 'Praise thou the Lord, O my soul.'

She was now prepared for conversation, so I said, "How sorry I am, my poor Mrs. Whiston, to have seen you again in so much distress. I had hoped never to witness it any more. Has any new fear come over you? Open your mind to me, if you can, and I have no doubt but that I shall be able to comfort you." "You have done it very often, Sir," she answered; "and God bless you for it! But, ah! Sir" she said fetching a deep sigh "I do not see how I can get to heaven, when there are so few that will be saved." "Why not?" I inquired. "May not you yourself be one of those few,?" "When there are to be but a few, Sir," she replied, "it stands to reason that a single person must have a smaller chance." "Yes indeed," I said, "if it were a matter of chance it might be so, but chance has nothing at all to do with it." "No, truly," interposed the aunt, "it has been fixed and determined long ago by One whose decrees cannot be overturned by chance." Do those decrees alarm you yet?" I inquired of the sick desponding woman. "No Sir, not at all," she answered; "since your explanation of them, and of the gracious declaration of Scripture, I am encouraged rather than alarmed. But only think, Sir, what is there in *me* that my God and Saviour should vouchsafe to make me one of a few. If there were many, might I not have a better hope to be one of many?" "At all events," I said, "your humbleness of mind is very much to be praised. It is the true Christian spirit, and has a blessing promised to it. But as to hope, there is none for any who have not the Gospel marks about them. All who have those marks will undoubtedly be saved, whether the whole number be large or small. If the whole number be small, *that* will not exclude any individual having the marks; and were the whole number absolutely countless, yet it would not include any who have them not. In short, it matters not to us, whether there be few or many who will be ultimately saved. We must get the marks. Few or many have nothing to do with our own salvation."

The idea had taken so firm a hold of her imagination that my reasoning failed to convince her, and she still persisted in her opinion, and repeated it over and over again, that the smallness of the number to be saved diminished her hope of being one amongst them herself; "And, indeed, Sir," she said, "it is a most sad thing to reflect upon." "It is very sad certainly," I replied, "to reflect that so many souls, will be lost; yet it seems absurd, on the

other hand, that all men should despair or at least be dejected, on that account; which all must be, if your notion be right, that the hope of each individual is lessened. And, what is remarkable, the best men should be the most dejected; because the best men are always the most humble, and think meanly of themselves; knowing their own deficiencies, and not daring to compare their Christian attainments with the attainments of others. In short we come to this, that not one person in the whole world could ever feel any thing like what the Scripture calls the full assurance of hope, unless it might please God to reveal to any man that he should be certainly saved." "And this he does," cried the old lady eagerly interrupting me; "This is exactly what he does by the new birth."

"Well," I said, "we will not argue that point over again. Your niece here is, I believe, quite clear about it, that there is no testimony equal to the testimony of our own conscience that we have endeavoured to obey all the divine commands in godly sincerity. This was St. Paul's test. 'My rejoicing is the testimony of my conscience.' Let the same be ours; and then we need not mind for ourselves, how few they may be who will be saved by Christ's gospel. But, my good Mrs. Whiston, you use this word 'few,' as if it meant ten or twenty persons only. Why, verily, if there were but ten or twenty to be saved, there might be a better excuse for being alarmed about the smallness of the number; but surely you do not limit the few to ten or twenty persons, do you?" "No, Sir," she answered; "not to ten or twenty, certainly." "No," I continued; "nor to a hundred, I suppose; nor even to a thousand; no, nor to tens of thousands, or millions either?" "A million is a great many Sir," she said. "Yes," I rejoined, "in itself; but it is a very few in comparison with the thousands, and tens of thousands of millions who will be judged at the last day. This is the sense of the word 'few.' The persons saved will be of all nations and languages; they will come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south; in fact, there will be numbers of them without number, without the power of being reckoned up by us. But still all these will be few in comparison of the greater numbers who will lose the prize. Well, then now consider, my good Mrs. Whiston, do you think that there will be no room for *you* amongst these few, who turn out after all to be so many? Cheer up; the last in their own estimation may be the first in the estimation of God."

A new light, as after some of my former explanations, again broke in upon her, and she exclaimed, "Heaven bless you, Sir, for enlightening my darkness! How ignorant and foolish I was! What do you think now, aunt? Has not the good Doctor Warton made this terrifying doctrine quite easy to us, and as clear as the sun at mid-day?" This forcible question produced, however no an-

swer. Her aunt was speechless, evidently mortified, that the cloud of dust which she had raised was now so completely dispelled. So the sick neice continued: "Why should we trouble ourselves, my good aunt, with these difficult doctrines, which are above our understanding; and, if we understood them ever so well, have nothing to do with our salvation? Would it not be wiser for us to do all that we are commanded to do, to the utmost of our power, and then trust patiently to the promises of God?"

This sage and excellent advice drew forth no approbation from the aunt. She had been admitted, as she thought, within the secret recesses of God's dwelling, and knew his most hidden counsels; the plain things, therefore, and such as were revealed for the use of ourselves and our children, namely, the divine laws, and the sanctions of those laws, and all other motives to obedience, these were beneath so exalted and advanced a Christian; these were but beggarly elements for mere babes and sucklings. These, however, were things which I considered it my bounden duty to applaud, inculcate, and enforce; so after a short pause, I took up Mrs. Whiston's sentiment, and said, "Our blessed Lord himself advised as you do. Some foolish people put this question to him, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' He gave them no direct answer to it, but warned them to strive to enter into his kingdom themselves, through the narrow and rugged road. And upon another occasion, when Peter, with an idle curiosity, inquired of him what was to become of John hereafter, he rebuked him with this admonition; 'What has *that* to do with *thee*? Follow thou *me*!' So you see, if we believe Jesus Christ, we must look to ourselves and to our own steps, and be careful that we walk blamelessly in all his laws, and seek after his kingdom with due earnestness; and then *we* shall not fail, whatever may happen to the rest of mankind?"

"I beg your pardon, reverend Sir," said the old lady, bursting from her long silence, and wrought up to a high pitch of anger; "you must excuse me, Sir, but I cannot sit here, and see the texts of Scripture so shamefully perverted, without noticing it in the proper terms, and with the proper feeling. Why, Sir, in this very text about the few that shall be saved, we are positively told, that many shall seek to enter into God's kingdom, and shall not be able. But it pleases you, forsooth, to overlook this, the most important part of the text, and so to represent it, as to make it appear to suit your purpose. No, no, Sir; Christ's flock is but a little flock; he says so himself, and they only shall belong to it, who have been appointed thereunto from the beginning: the rest may seek, and labour, and fret themselves about it as much as they will; but all their pains will be thrown away; God will have his own will, and we are but clay in his hands."

The tone of passion and incivility, with which all this was spo-

ken, dismayed every body, and especially the sick woman; and they seemed to be considering what they ought to say, or do, to soften it down to me, and to prevent a similar ebullition of fanatical zeal; but I anticipated them by replying with the utmost calmness, and with little delay.—“Listen, Madam, if you please, and if you can bring yourself to hear reason. You say that Christ told us, his flock should be a little flock; but how does that apply to what we are now talking about, unless by the word ‘flock’ be meant the persons that shall be saved?” “And what else can it mean?” she said peevishly. “We shall see,” I answered, “in a moment; but first let me know, if this be the text in your mind: ‘Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’” “To be sure it is,” she said. “Well then,” I rejoined, “the little flock were those to whom he spoke; were they not?” She hesitated; so I continued: “You will not say, I presume, that all the elect of all ages were then standing before him?” She allowed reluctantly that it was not possible. “It could not then be all the elect whom he called the little flock, but only that very small portion of them which then surrounded him: in fact, his daily followers. These were the persons whom he consoled with the assurance that they should ultimately obtain the kingdom. Is not this so?” She was vexed, and confounded, and bit her lips in silence. “The elect then,” I thus proceeded, “might be any number whatever, so far as this text is concerned. At first, without doubt, and of necessity, they were but a few, a little flock; but how does it appear, from this text, that the flock might not afterwards become very numerous? Beware, therefore, my good Madam, how you accuse others of perverting texts of Scripture; for you must be conscious now, how entirely you yourself have perverted this.”

Here Mrs. Whiston interposed, and said, “You must be so kind as to pardon my aunt, Sir. She did not mean, I am sure, to pervert Scripture; she was under a mistake; she cannot be supposed to understand these things so well as you do, Sir.” The aunt did not at all relish this sort of help, which assumed her ignorance of Scripture; but still she spoke nothing. So I said, “Oh! yes, I pardon her very readily. What I lament is this, that persons ignorant of Scripture will persist in quoting it, and, what is worse, wrest it often to their own destruction. Now I am quite sure that your aunt here has not the least notion of the true meaning of this text; and most probably none of you have.” The old lady bit her lips as before; but Mrs. Whiston said immediately, “Pray then explain it to us, Sir.” “I will with pleasure I replied: “the kingdom here spoken of is not the kingdom of heaven, as I dare say you all imagine, but the triumph of Christianity upon earth. Our Lord bids his disciples to fear nothing: for, although they

were now so small a flock, and without riches, or learning, or power, or authority, or any other human means to spread his religion in the world, and, in short, would have all these things against them, and every sort of persecution and misery to boot, yet that they should ultimately conquer all opposition and every difficulty, and that kingdoms and empires should submit to their superior rule. He foretold this, and this has happened. The grain of mustard-seed has sprung up into a mighty tree, and now the fowls of the air lodge in its branches, and the beasts of the field repose under its shade. At the name of Jesus the greatest monarchs of the earth now bow their knees."

"Thank you, Sir!" said Mrs. Whiston, "thank you, again and again! This text is now so plain to me, that I am sure it will frighten me no more. What a pity, aunt, that we, who are no scholars, should run with our itching ears after cobblers and carpenters, who are as ignorant as ourselves, and leave Dr. Warton and such as he is, who have nothing to do but study the Scriptures, and become able to explain them to *us*. Why, you know, our ministers at Sion Chapel have had no education, and now they work all the week to maintain themselves and their families by the labour of their hands and the sweat of their brows; and how then can we expect them to understand these things so well as Dr. Warton, who has been brought up to the ministry from his youth, and has been never otherwise employed than in preparing himself for it?" "Pshaw! child," exclaimed the aunt, boiling with rage at the odious contrast which her niece had drawn, "hold your tongue, for shame? Thou knowest nothing. What were the Apostles? Were they not fishermen?" "Yes, aunt," said Mrs. Whiston with great composure; "but, you may remember, they left their nets, and followed Christ, and so ever afterwards they were fishers of men." Still more irritated, and not seeing at once how to answer this on account of her passion, the aunt exclaimed again, "But what was St. Paul? Was he not a tent-maker; and did he not work daily, with his own hands, at his own trade, to procure himself daily food? He says so himself, and therefore it is undeniable."

This was beyond poor Mrs. Whiston's depth, and she looked round to *me* for assistance, if assistance were to be had; the aunt, meanwhile, being mistress of the field, and triumphing, as long as the pause continued, in her apparent victory. Here then I interposed: "St. Paul," I said, "was a very extraordinary man; he had all the helps of human learning, and of divine inspiration. Born in a learned city, and brought up in all the other learning of his time, he was sent by his parents to Jerusalem to get all the learning of the Jews; and this he did at the feet of Gamaliel, a most distinguished doctor of the Jewish law. Meanwhile, this

did not prevent him from being instructed in a trade. In fact, all the Jews of all ranks were instructed in trades ; it was the custom of the people. These, then, were the circumstances of St. Paul, when he was converted from being a Jew to be a Christian ; all the Scriptures at that time in existence, namely, the Scriptures of the Old Testament, were thoroughly known to him ; indeed, no man knew them better. He had, however, the Christian learning yet to obtain ; and this was given to him in the course of two or three years by communications directly from above ; not in the ordinary way of instruction, or from the other Apostles, but immediately from Jesus Christ himself ; that is, whatever the rest of the Apostles knew, by having lived and conversed with Christ, was made known to St. Paul by inspiration ; this inspiration placed him exactly upon the same footing of knowledge with *them*. Thus furnished, then, and under the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost, he went forth to the great work of converting the Gentiles to Christianity. He had nothing further whatever to study or to learn ; he was perfectly acquainted with every thing ; he could besides perform miracles ; and all the languages of all the nations, amongst whom he went, were in an instant made quite easy and familiar to him by the teaching of the Spirit, without any other master, and without any trouble of his own. It is plain, then, that such a man, when he was not employed in his sacred ministrations, might spare time to work with his hands for his daily support ; and indeed that he *must* have done so, in some of the strange countries which he visited in the course of his travels ; or, if not, one of these two things would necessarily have been the consequence ; either, that he must have been fed and clothed miraculously, as some of the Prophets were ; or that he must have been a burden to those people, to whom he preached the Gospel. This, for the very best reasons mentioned by himself, he determined most carefully to avoid ; God did not vouchsafe to feed or clothe him miraculously, but on the contrary permitted him to be afflicted with hunger, and thirst, and cold, and nakedness ; nothing remained, therefore, but to labour with his own hands to supply his necessities. Now, then, I should be glad to hear in what respects your cobblers and carpenters resemble St. Paul ? Is there one single feature the same in both ?”

“ Yes, Sir,” said the aunt, who had had time to cool during my long speech, “ that which is the only thing of any consequence is the same in both. Our ministers are called as he was, and the Spirit teaches them always what to do, and what to say. How else could they go on as they do ?” “ A supernatural call,” I answered, “ and supernatural help, would be very difficult for your cobblers and carpenters to prove. From what I hear, they do nothing more than what cobblers and carpenters might very

well be supposed able to do of themselves. St. Paul proved himself to be a divine messenger by performing miracles ; do they the same ?” She could not say that they did. “ Well, then,” I continued, “ we must give up their supernatural calls and their supernatural helps, unless they can be proved. For, even if they really had them, it would not signify to *me*, unless I were convinced of the fact, and how that could be without miracles I do not see. We come, therefore, back again to what your niece observed ; that it is better to stick to the Church, than to look for right instruction to such persons, who are perhaps but arrogant or fanatical pretenders to knowledge and inspiration.”

“ Yes, aunt,” said Mrs. Whiston, “ let us follow the Doctor’s counsel, and go back to our church. For myself, if it please God to give me strength, I shall make up for the past neglect by future diligence.” This resolution was by no means agreeable to the old lady ; but she saw, I suppose, that it would not be quite decent to combat it in my presence, so she recurred in her thoughts to the text which she had accused me of garbling and perverting ; and she escaped by that loop-hole from the present difficulty. “ Our ministers, Sir,” she said, “ are better gifted than you, I suppose, will be ready to allow ; and they know the Scriptures too well to think of telling us, that all who choose to seek after the kingdom of God shall find it. You have forgotten, Sir, the main portion of that text, which says, that many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able. I wait to hear how you will account for having overlooked it.”

“ I did not overlook it, Madam,” I replied, “ nor did I misrepresent the whole text ; and I am glad that you have brought me back to it. To the best of my recollection I said, that, if we sought after the kingdom of heaven with the proper earnestness, we should not fail of obtaining it. I did not say that mere seeking in any way would be enough, but seeking earnestly ; and this is what the text most awfully teaches us. I will ask *you*, Mrs. Whiston, (because I am sorry to observe that it is painful to your aunt to be convinced of the truth, instead of being a reason for joy to her,) I will ask *you* a few questions about this text ; but I desire that she will immediately stop us when she is not satisfied with your answers.” To this compact there was a silent assent. So I said, “ Tell me then, first, whether our Lord does not admonish us to strive to enter in at the strait gate ?” “ Certainly,” she replied ; “ those are his very words.” “ Tell me next,” I continued, “ whether it is likely that he intended to mock us ?” “ It would be wicked, Sir,” she said eagerly, “ to think so.” “ But would it not be a downright mockery,” I inquired, “ if he bid us strive, and yet knew all the time in his own mind that striving would be utterly useless ?” “ Indeed it would, Sir,” she answer-

ed. "And would not striving be utterly useless," I inquired again, "if every man's lot was fixed unchangeably from the beginning?" "Most certainly," she said without hesitation; "there can be no doubt of it whatever." Here upon looking across the bed I saw that the old aunt was very uneasy, so I begged of her by all means to correct these answers, if she could; but she only bit her lips and remained silent. I therefore drew the conclusion,—that every man's lot was not fixed from the beginning, and also that every one who strove might be saved, however few the whole number of the saved might be. "This is very just, Sir," said Mrs. Whiston, "and very comfortable too."

"Well, then," I proceeded, "we will now go on. Did our Lord say, 'Strive to enter in;' and then immediately afterwards, 'for many will strive to enter in, and shall not be able?'" "No, indeed, Sir," she answered with quickness, "for that would have been very like contradicting himself." "Truly so," I rejoined; "but what did he say then?" "Seek, was his word, Sir," she answered. "To strive, and to seek, then, are not the same thing; are they?" I inquired. "No, Sir," she said. "And 'to strive' will be enough; but 'to seek' too little: is not this his meaning?" I inquired again. "It is as plain as possible, Sir," she replied. "Seeking, then, being too little of itself," I continued, "suppose we add to it zeal, and earnestness, and diligence, and perseverance; might not a man be said to strive, if he seeks zealously, and earnestly, and diligently, and perseveringly?" "We may well think so, Sir," she answered. "Seeking, then," I said, "is only a low degree of striving, and too low a degree of it; is not this the case?" She assented readily. "Yes, indeed," I proceeded, "striving is a very strong expression in our English tongue, but the actual word which our Lord himself used in his own tongue is tenfold stronger. Do you happen to know John Atkins of this parish?" "Yes, Sir," she said, "I believe every body knows him." "He is a great fighter, or boxer, or pugilist, as they call such persons; is he not?" I inquired. "And does he not wish to get the character of being the champion of the whole country, and more than a match for every other pugilist?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "that is understood to be his great desire." "Well, then," I said, "do you know how he prepares himself for a long time before, when he is challenged to fight a battle?" "Oh! yes," she replied, "I have heard all about it." "He eats and drinks every day," I said, "the sort of things, and in such quantities, as are likely to make him as strong as possible; he takes the proper medicines, if the habit of his body be out of order; he clothes himself so as neither to catch cold, nor to be weakened by too much warmth; he takes regular exercise, so as to keep up his whole activity, and not to be out of wind in the

time of need ; he practises, in sham-fights with other skilful boxers, whatever may be most likely to occur in the real battle ; in short, he turns his mind from all other business and all other objects ; the prize to be gained engrosses every thought and every wish of his heart ; he has not even a secondary care to distract him ; he whets his courage, and stirs up every energy within him, by fixing his view upon the prize, and the prize alone : is not this a just description of the system which John Atkins pursues, without once deviating from it, in order that he may climb to the top of his ambition ?”

“ You have described it exactly, Sir,” said Mrs. Whiston, “ and I suppose you know besides what a drunken fellow he is ; and how, on these occasions, he debars himself of his drink, and keeps quite sober, to the astonishment of every body.” “ Yes,” I replied, “ I know it all very well, and therefore I will crown my description by adding, that he submits willingly to every privation ; whatever darling vice he may have, most delightful to his nature and habits, and at other times his supreme happiness, he renounces it now without the slightest hesitation, and without a single pang. Such, then, is John Atkins, when he ‘ strives ’ for this mastery on earth ; for a poor, worthless, fading, withering crown after all ; in fact, for a mere empty name. But this is really to ‘ strive : ’ now you may understand and feel the mighty force of the actual expression of our Lord ; and you may see also what is required of *us*, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven. And it is no wonder that we should be required to exert ourselves so much, when the crown which is set before us is so rich, beyond all price, one that never withers or fades, incorruptible, immortal in the heavens. Do you think that this crown should be given to any one who will not strive for it, as John Atkins strives for his ?”

“ Ah! Sir,” she answered tremblingly ; “ but who ever strives in that manner ? If *that* be necessary to get to heaven, the number will be few indeed.” “ Few,” I said, “ in proportion to the whole race of Adam, certainly ; but not so few, perhaps, as you may imagine. A prophet once complained that he was the only man left to worship the true God ; but God told him that there were seven thousand more who had never bowed the knee to Baal. Without doubt it is the same now. There are thousands of whom we know nothing, secretly, and without show, believing, and endeavouring to obey the Gospel, in all sincerity and godliness ; using great diligence to make their calling and election sure ; working out their salvation with fear and trembling ; and trying to add to their faith, step by step, every Christian grace and virtue. This sort and degree of striving God will accept for Christ’s sake ; this he puts into the power of us all ; and you may be confident that no man will ever perish but by his own fault. Why is it that

those who perish will be so many? Is it not because they will not renounce their bosom-sins, repent, and amend their lives; cease to do evil, and learn to do well; strive, in short, to become what Christ would have them, and the Holy Ghost would make them? Can any other reason be assigned why such numbers will fall short of the glory of God? For, as to your aunt's reason, that God condemned them, before they were born, to be vessels of wrath, what do you think of it?" "It is horrible, Sir," she replied, shuddering; "it is too horrible." "Yes, niece," exclaimed the aunt hastily, "but I never said so. The Doctor misrepresents me. I only said, that God passed them by." "*That* is precisely the same thing in the end," I resumed. "It is a softer and gentler mode of expressing it, but it comes to the same conclusion. There are but two places to go to, heaven and hell, and all must go to one or the other; so that they who are not appointed to heaven are virtually, whether by appointment or not, doomed to hell. It is but foolish quibbling to state the matter otherwise. No, no, the real truth is, what I laid down before, that the Gospel having placed life and death before us, and the choice of the one or the other being put into our own power, if we perish, we shall perish by our own fault. To avoid this, therefore, we must be strivers, and not mere seekers; we must be doers of the word, and not hearers only; we must not build upon any sandy foundations, but shake off our sins; we must not sit idle, in expectation of conversions and new births; we must not say, Lord, Lord, and neglect to obey him; we must not depend upon faith whilst we are without works, but by our works we must demonstrate and adorn our faith. All who act in this manner will be received into that glorious house, in which, thank God! there are many mansions, and of which the maker and builder is God himself. As for the rest, who seek only, and never strive—who may wish, but not endeavour—although it may be painful to us now to think how numerous they will be, yet we shall be convinced hereafter, not only of God's justice in their condemnation, but also of his previous merciful dispensations to save them from it."

Having now, as I thought, exhausted the subject, I prepared to close the conversation; so I inquired if she understood all that I had said, and was convinced of the truth of it. She assured me that she both understood and was convinced; "Then," I said, "you will never more trouble yourself about the number of the persons to be saved, but you will apply the text to yourself, as an awful warning to attend to your own condition. *That* was the very use which Christ intended us to make of it. I will now, therefore, leave you; but I must request of *you*, Madam," turning to the aunt, "not to talk to your niece upon such points, which perhaps none of us thoroughly comprehend, and about which you are

proved to be yourself greatly mistaken." The aunt did not answer me, but champed the bit with an impatient restlessness. Then kneeling down, I prayed, as after a sermon, that God would graft what had been said inwardly in our hearts, so as that it might produce a holy and religious life. After which, pronouncing the benediction, I rose and departed.

Subsequently Mrs. Graves told me that the old lady had expressed herself as by no means satisfied with my doctrines, but that still she would hold her peace in future, lest I should accuse her of being the cause of her niece's troubles. So ended this matter.

§ 2.—MRS. WHISTON, HER HUSBAND, MRS. GRAVES, &c.

AGAIN things proceeded smoothly for some time, and without any interruptions from the aunt, and I have no new occurrence or conversation to record, during that interval, peculiar to the case before me. But one day afterwards, by accident, I found Mrs. Whiston's husband with her, as well as her sister and Mrs. Graves, in the sick chamber; and I soon observed a look of uneasiness in her countenance, and a restlessness of manner, which betrayed something wrong.

Upon my entering, Mrs. Graves, pointing, said, "This is Mrs. Whiston's husband, Sir." "Yes," I replied, "I know him very well, now I see him here." Then, addressing the man himself, who had risen from his chair to receive me, I continued: "We have met each other in the street very often, and I have also of late observed you now and then at church, but without knowing you. I am glad to meet you at length in this house of mourning; where, perhaps, it is better for us all to be, than in the houses of joy." He took this for a reproof; so he tried to excuse himself for his apparent carelessness about his wife, by pleading, that he had been much engaged in inquiring round the country, from morning till night, and day after day, for work; and he added, "I am sorry to tell you, Sir, that I cannot get any." "Why, it is a pity, to be sure," I said, "not to be able to get any work, when the sickness of your poor wife calls upon you so strongly to labour to the very utmost for her comfort and support. God knows, she has no appetite to eat or drink much; but a sick person, and especially one who has been so long sick, wants a thousand little things, out of the common way, and which are not to be had without cost, to lighten the misery of the sick-bed, and to keep body and soul together. It surprises me, however, to hear you say, that you have

been obliged to go round the country to seek for work, when there is so much to be done at this season at home. I am almost sure that there is not a single, able-bodied man in this parish out of work at this moment, but of his own will, or by his own fault; none, in short, but the idle and the drunken. You must have been very unfortunate, therefore, in not inquiring at the right places. Where have you been used to work?"

During this speech of mine the man's conscience smote him severely, and his colour came and went in quick succession. The proof of his mismanagement was but too evident, and could not be denied. At length he answered, with much stammering, that he had worked sometimes with one and sometimes with another, in order to get better wages for the more respectable maintenance of his family. "Supposing your account to be true," I replied, "the event shows that your scheme is a bad one. Here are *you* out of work, whilst all the regular people are in full employment, and likely to be so during the winter. What signifies, therefore, the short gain of your larger wages? If you divide what you get into fifty-two parts. I fancy you will find that the regular workman, keeping the same place all the year, gets much more weekly upon the average than you do. To tell you, however, my opinion of the matter, I must confess, that I have always observed that system of yours to be accompanied by idleness and drunkenness; and I believe that the great wages for the better support of the family are only the pretence, and that the indulgence of idleness and drunkenness is the real cause of the system. Such persons, instead of taking better care of their families, generally spend much time and money at the alehouse, and seldom go to work on Monday at all. I do not accuse you of being one of those persons; for as you do not belong to this parish, I am not sufficiently acquainted with you; but you know perfectly well yourself, whether you have done your duty to this poor, sick, afflicted creature, who lies here. I advise you, therefore, to examine your own conscience about it, strictly and severely; and if you find yourself guilty, to repent and change your conduct, whilst God spares you time to do it; for otherwise you will have a terrible account to give before the Great Judge, when you leave the present world."

The solemn tone in which I spoke this; the destitute and dying condition of his wife, unalleviated by any help of his; the loss of his two children; the want and beggary which stared him in the face; and the fears of another world, conspired to agitate the man, although unused to softer feelings, and I saw with pleasure a tear stealing from his eye, the gracious symbol of remorse. His wife also saw it, and from her natural kindness of heart she was unwilling that he should suffer any pain, and so she interposed here, and said, "Ah! Sir, we were talking about it when you came in; and

I am pretty sure that he thinks differently now from what he used to do. God, I hope, will give him grace to repent seriously and thoroughly, and also without delay. It is not an easy thing, Sir, to do it upon a sick bed; and in such a situation we can hardly give any proof of our sincerity. Indeed, Sir, I tremble for myself. I fear that I do not feel such a degree of sorrow for my sins as I ought, and such as is sufficient to make my repentance effectual. I try, Sir, to feel more deeply, but I cannot do it. I do not even shed a tear. Can I hope for salvation with so hard a heart, as my aunt used to call it?"

"Sins!" exclaimed her husband, rousing himself from his agitation, "she has no sins to repent of, Sir, except her goodness to *me*, and her bearing so easily with the wrongs that I have done her. She is an angel on earth, Sir, and too good to continue here." "Very well," I said, "let this be a warning to *you*. You see how she feels when preparing for death, after a whole life, as you suppose, of goodness; what then must the feelings of the wilful sinner be, when he thinks of meeting his God? But I hope, with respect to yourself, as you have begun to come to church, it is a proof of your intention to change your whole conduct, and by an early repentance to spare yourself that bitter pang." Then turning to the wife, I said, "It is very true that no life, no, nor any single act, can stand the scrutiny of God. If he were extreme to mark whatever is done by us, even our best deeds, we could not abide it; some flaw or other would be found in them. But supposing them to be perfect, what would they be in comparison with the everlasting joys of Heaven? However, they are in fact very imperfect; and there is one great class of sins which too many are apt to overlook altogether; sins of omission I will call them; the things which they ought to have done, and which they have left undone. No doubt, therefore, but that every man living is a sinner in the eye of God, and stands in need of a Saviour to atone for him, and of repentance to show his sincerity; his whole life, indeed, must be a life of repentance."

Before I could proceed to topics of consolation, as I intended, she interrupted me by saying with a faltering voice, "Ah, Sir, so it must be indeed; and, after all, how can we be sure of our sincerity? The heart, you know, Sir, is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; so that nobody can make any certain judgment of his own. This is what troubles me, Sir; and I dare not speak peace to myself, for fear that there may be no peace for me." "Then I will speak peace to you," I exclaimed, "so far as that text of the Prophet Jeremiah is concerned; you and many others mistake the sense of it." "Indeed, Sir!" she cried eagerly. "How I wish my aunt were here, that it might be explained to *her*, as well as to myself! I am sure she understands it as I did.

We heard it very often mentioned at Sion Chapel; it was a favourite text with our ministers."

"Very likely," I said; "but consider for a moment. What do you mean by the heart?" She hesitated; so I continued. "Do you not mean the thoughts, inclinations, intentions, desires, affections, and passions, of the human mind?" "*That* must be it, no doubt, Sir," she replied. "Well then," I resumed, "if you think any thing, intend any thing, are inclined towards any thing, desire any thing, love any thing, hate any thing, are disturbed in any way about any thing; do you not always know it?" "To be sure I do," she answered. "If you thought of stealing," I said, "or of telling a lie, could you possibly be ignorant of the thought?" "No, indeed," she replied; "it could not be." "In short, then," I said, "you agree with me, that every one must know every thing that comes into the heart upon every occasion." "I do, Sir," she answered, "You are right, certainly," I continued; "for Scripture tells us, that the spirit of a man, which is in him, knows all the things of the man; all the things which pass in his own breast. But then, what does the Prophet mean? you will ask. Why, he means that none of us know the hearts of others; and therefore, as this is the case, as men's hearts are so deceitful, that we can never know how they will act towards us, we must put our whole trust in God only."

"Why this is very plain indeed, Sir," she said, recovering her serenity; "and I see no reason now to fear, as I have done, about this text. But may I ask, Sir, is there nothing in which we may be deceived by our own hearts?" "Oh, yes," I replied, "with respect to the future they may deceive us in this manner. Here is your poor husband, who seems to have resolved to leave off drinking; and probably his heart assures him, at this moment, that he will certainly keep his resolution. But may he not take to drinking again, and thus deceive himself?" "He *may*, Sir," she said; "but I hope he will not." "Well," I continued, "he knows perfectly what his own resolutions are; he knows perfectly whether he is sincere in making those resolutions, his heart does not deceive him in any of these things; but he does not, and cannot know, whether he shall keep his resolutions for a single day. In this respect he does not know his own heart; and in this sense, although he did not mean it, the Prophet's text is true. There is also another way in which our hearts may deceive us with respect to the future. Have you observed how men go on from one crime to another, from bad to worse?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "it is almost always so." "Does not the drunken man," I said, "very often take to robbing, for the sake of getting money to spend in drink?" She allowed it, shuddering on account of her husband. "And does not the robber," I asked again, "sometimes commit

murder?" She assented. "Now then," I said, "let us ask your husband, whether he does not abhor the very thought of robbing and murdering." Here the man answered for himself, at once, and with vehemence, that no love or desire of liquor could ever urge him to a dishonest deed. "Very well," I continued, "at this moment you feel quite sure of your honesty. But let me tell you that there is no security but in leaving off drinking. Every robber, and every murderer, has said or thought the same that you do now; and yet, becoming by degrees familiarized to vice, and carried onward by circumstances, they plunge into the worst crimes. This, then, is another way in which we may be deceived with respect to the future; and none but persons who are daily growing in the Christian graces and virtues can venture to answer for themselves at all.

"It is too true, indeed, Sir," said the sick woman; "but are we not deceived by our own hearts very often at the present moment? Do not many people think that they are in a good state, when they are in a bad state?" "Yes," I answered, "and some people think themselves in a bad state, when they are in a good one; but neither of these cases is the consequence of a deceitful heart. They happen, because men will not sufficiently examine their own hearts, or because they make mistakes about the terms of salvation. Are there not persons so full of business or pleasure every day, every hour, that they scarcely ever think about their spiritual condition at all?" "I fear there are too many," she answered. "But if these people were to ask their own hearts about it," I said, "would not their hearts tell them?" "To be sure they would," she replied. "So then," I continued, "it is not their hearts which deceive them; for they never consult their hearts to find out the truth, and perhaps they do not consult them for this very reason, because they are afraid of knowing the truth. Did you ever hear of tradesmen being afraid to examine their books?" "Yes, Sir," she said, "I believe it often happens." "Is it not," I asked, "because they are apprehensive of finding themselves ruined men?" "I suppose so," she answered. "But if they were to examine their books properly, would not the books show them precisely in what state they were?" I asked again. "Without doubt they would," she replied. "Well then, now tell me," I said, "if their books deceive them."—"How can that be, Sir," she answered with vivacity, "when they never look into them?" "It is just so then," I said, "with our own hearts, which are to *us* what the tradesmen's books are to *him*; if we consult them not at all, or not sufficiently, we shall have an imperfect knowledge of our condition; but it would be a great mistake to say that our hearts deceived us."

"It is very true, Sir," she replied; "and I wonder now that I

did not understand this before. But you talked, Sir, of our mistaking the terms of salvation: *that* is a very alarming thing, Sir, and I hope you will explain it to me." "Certainly," I said, "I will do so immediately; and you shall, see, that the deceitfulness of the human heart has no concern with such mistakes. Do you remember, that the Scripture positively tells us, 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord?' " "Yes, Sir," she answered; "and it is fearful to think of it." "Suppose then," I said, "that you saw persons very diligent in attending to God's public worship, and even now and then partaking of the holy sacrament, but not relinquishing any one habit of vice, nor mortifying a single lust; and yet hoping to get to heaven nevertheless on the strength of their regular church-going; would you not say, that it had happened to them, by some means or other, not to be properly instructed as to the conditions of salvation?" "I should, certainly," she replied. "It is no deceitfulness of the heart, then," I said, "which leads them into this mistake; but it is their neglect of studying the Gospel, and of informing their understandings aright about it. Suppose, again, that a person, frequenting a conventicle, should hear perpetually that any righteousness of his own was but filthy rags, and to be utterly disparaged and disclaimed; and that he must lay hold of Christ's righteousness, and trust to *that* alone, as being imputed to himself; and that this, without any further trouble on his own part, or any seeking or striving after holiness, will ensure salvation to him: well, the man hearing this doctrine, and knowing no other, adopts it greedily, and soon brings himself to feel as the preachers have taught him; will you tell me that this man's deceitful heart is to blame? No, no; it is his ignorance, it is the misfortune of his not having been able to read or understand the Scriptures himself, and of his having depended upon ill-informed, fanatical instructors. His heart does not deceive him at all; it tells him precisely what his present state is, namely, that he is not fruitful in good works; and he, unfortunately for himself, thinks *that* to be a good state which is a bad one, because he knows no better. They have never impressed upon him, that he who doeth righteousness is righteous; that he who nameth the name of Christ must depart from all iniquity; and that by patient continuance in well-doing he must look for glory and immortality. What wonder, therefore, if the man, corrupt by nature, and sinful by habit, be readily and almost willingly mistaken!"

"Yes, indeed, Sir," she said, "it is natural enough, without accusing our poor hearts of being deceitful or wicked. But suppose then, Sir, that I am sincere in my repentance towards God, as my heart tells me now that I am, and cannot but tell me the truth with respect to my present thoughts and designs; yet still you know, Sir, that even a sincere repentance may not be any thing

like what it ought to be in the greatness of the sorrow and affliction which accompany it. Mine I cannot call the broken and contrite heart. Peter wept bitterly; and the penitent woman washed the feet of our Saviour with the abundance of her tears; whilst I myself, as I mentioned before, cannot shed a single tear."

"Listen," I said, "my good Mrs. Whiston, and believe me, when I assure you, that one man may shed abundance of tears, when he reflects upon the unworthiness of his past life, and another may review it with dry eyes; and yet this latter may be the more really penitent and contrite of the two. To understand this matter, you must consider, that two things are necessary to make up the true and complete repentance; one inward, showing itself in our own breasts only; the other outward, and showing itself in our actions. As to that of which we are now speaking, namely, that which takes place in our own breasts, if it be perfect, it generally proceeds in this manner:—first, we are conscious of our sins; then we are sorry for them; then we hate them; and, lastly, we resolve to forsake them. But this last is clearly the most important step, and the others are only so far important as they tend to produce this; and indeed we might naturally suppose, that where the sense of sin is deep, and the sorrow for it, and hatred of it, very great, there the resolutions against it will be stronger, and more effectual, and more likely to show themselves in the outward conduct; that is, in the actual abandonment of sin, and in the bringing forth of the fruits of repentance. Nevertheless, a sorrow which is really very great, and fixed deeply in the heart, may not produce any passionate signs or expressions of its power: the thing depends upon a man's body, as well as upon his mind; it is in a great degree constitutional. Some persons, therefore, are ready to shed tears on all occasions; others never, or rarely do it, on the greatest; yet the real inward sorrow of both may be equal, and the conclusion to which they come the same.

"There is another circumstance, also, to be considered; and that is, whether the sins for which we are sorry were committed lately, or a long time ago. If a long time ago, it seems impossible that our sorrow for them should be expressed with any very passionate outward tokens. The memory of a remote action cannot affect us as the same action might have done at the time when it was fresh: the poignancy of the feeling will be blunted by years, although, what is most important, the permanent hatred of sin and the resolution against it may be always the same. If a well-disposed person, under an unusual temptation, or off his guard, were to commit a sin, no doubt he would be much afflicted at the first; but if this sorrow were to wear off in after-life, it would be no proof that his repentance was not then sincere, or not so afflict-

ing as it ought to be. Have I made myself intelligible to you, and touched your case?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied, "I understand you very well, and your doctrine brings me great comfort : but I will not content myself with trying to avoid all sin ; I will try to be sorry for it, and to hate it more than I now do ; and then, perhaps, I shall find it more easy to avoid it." "*That* is not unlikely," I said, "at least for people in general, and so I have already explained it ; and whoever would wish to get a deeper sorrow for sin, and a more thorough hatred of it, should consider what a pure and holy being God himself is ; and, therefore, how odious and abominable all sin must be in his sight, and what danger there is, lest it might provoke him to let loose his wrath and indignation against the sinner. Indeed nothing could have prevented this, but that Jesus Christ interposed between his offended Father and us, and shielded us from utter destruction in hell. It was sin which drew him down from heaven to suffer what he did in our stead. What a detestable thing, therefore, and how perilous, must sin itself be ! What a price did it cost to atone for it ! Ah, whenever we commit sin we crucify our blessed Redeemer over again ! But think besides, what a kind and merciful God we have, and how many good things he gives us every day ; and, above all, that he spared not his own beloved Son from his bosom to come down, and die for us : think of this, and then, I am sure, you ought to burn with gratitude ; and gratitude will produce love. But if you love God, it is the more probable that you will never disobey him, or offend him, without grieving from the very heart, or without abhorring yourself in dust and ashes. However, we may save ourselves much of this pain, by striving always to keep his holy word and commandments ; and if we do so strive, we may be quite certain that we shall have such abundance of grace bestowed upon us, as will enable us to go on the rest of our way through life rejoicing with joy unutterable. This I recommend to your husband. Let him begin at once. He has, I hope, begun already ; so let us kneel down, and pray that he may have strength to continue, and to advance with the quicker steps."

For this purpose I read the four Collects in Advent, beginning with the last ; and then the Lord's prayer. After which I pronounced the benediction, being in a hurry, and left them.

The same day, in the course of my walks, having made inquiries amongst the farmers of the parish, I obtained employment for Mrs. Whiston's husband, with an understanding that it should be continued through the winter, if he behaved well, and if there were no particular demand for labour amongst our own parishioners. He pretended at least to be thankful for this successful negotiation of mine for him, and immediately went to work ; so that

something now came in to lessen the burden, which had pressed heavily upon Mrs. Graves, but which she herself, good creature, had sustained without a single murmur. Indeed she had undertaken the charge voluntarily at the first, and she bore it cheerfully throughout. As yet she knew nothing of the reward which I was preparing for her, and which I studiously concealed. Her own conscience, however was a rich and perpetual feast.

One day after this, by accident going into the cottage between twelve and one o'clock, I found there William Graves, the husband of this excellent woman. He had just dined, and was playing with his children, his wife being up stairs with her sick friend. I was glad of such an opportunity of speaking to him. A good opinion of him I had already, as I knew that he was sober and industrious, and as I saw him constantly at church. But I was curious to ascertain particularly what he thought of the expense, and trouble, and inconvenience, occasioned to his family by Mrs. Whiston's abode in his house.

He rose from his chair as I entered, and put down two children from his lap on the floor. They were in high spirits, and pulled the flaps of my coat, as they ran by me with the rest into the garden. We were now quite alone. "How do you do, Graves?" I said. "You are so regular in your business, that, often as I have been here, I have not once seen you before." "No, Sir," he answered, "when I have my health, as I have had lately, thank God! I am never at home but at meals; and not always then." Upon this he placed a chair for me, and invited me to sit down, which I did at once. He continued standing himself, and seemed as if he intended to do so during my stay; but I pressed him to resume his own seat, which, at length, he did reluctantly. "I am glad to see you," I said, "so happy in your family, Graves. Your children are better in health than they used to be, and as merry as grigs, I perceive; and your good wife keeps your house so nice and tidy, that I don't wonder you like it more than the alehouse. Ay, if all the wives in the parish were like yours, the alehouses would be shut up. The men would look for their comforts, and find them, at home."

"Why," he replied, "it is very true, Sir, what you say. But she has hard work now, poor soul; and the children begin to run wild a little. I am so much away, that I cannot look after them at all; and as for *her*, the sick woman upstairs wants her continually, and cannot do without her." "So I suppose," I said; "indeed it was a great undertaking to receive such a guest into a sickly family of your own, to be nursed, and provided for in every way." "Yes, Sir," he replied, "it was, and it has cost us a great deal of money besides attendance. But my wife wished it, and so I would not say her nay, though I was sadly frightened

about it. She was sure, she said, that it would bring a blessing upon us; and besides, Mrs. Whiston had been very kind to *us* in our troubles; and one good turn, you know, Sir, deserves another. So I have never grudged the expense, Sir, and I verily believe that she was right in saying we should be blessed for our deed. The health of us all was never better, and I never got better wages. Mrs. Whiston's husband being now in work he talks of taking her away; but poor creature, she is not able to move; and, if she were, I think my wife would not part with her unless she was so far recovered as to want no more help."

"I am afraid," I said, "that poor Mrs. Whiston will never move from this house, until she goes to the last house in the present world, which is her grave. But never mind;—your wife is certainly in the right, and you are in the right for listening to her so cheerfully, and so readily. God will reward you. God has rewarded you already. But there is something still better in store for you hereafter, if you spend your life in this truly Christian manner. Do you remember what our blessed Lord himself mentions that he will judge us by, when he sits upon the throne of his glory, and we all stand before him to hear our last sentence from his lips?" "Yes, Sir," he answered, "I remember it very well; but, sure, you do not think, Sir, that this deed of ours will be so graciously considered by him as to entitle us to a place upon his right hand? If that might be so, then we should be blessed in our deed beyond any thing that we could hope for here. But will he reward so greatly, Sir, for so little a service? And will he forgive our other failings for the sake of this one good action?"

It was impossible not to be pleased with these sentiments; and I began to esteem the character of the husband as highly as I did that of the wife. By living together they had improved each other; and each reflected the other's virtues. I answered him as follows:—

"In the eye of God, charity is the most lovely of all the Christian graces and virtues, because they who exercise it are most like himself, and most useful to their fellow-creatures. In short, if there were no charity in the world, it would be a fit place for devils only; if there were nothing else but charity, it would be fit for the abode of angels; it would be full of happiness and joy. If evil occurred, every tongue would sooth it; every hand relieve it. In whatever degree, therefore, charity prevails, so far the welfare and comfort of mankind, as well as the desire of God himself, are promoted and obtained. What wonder, then, that the Scriptures, which are God's word should be continually praising this virtue, and offering the highest recompense to those who practise it! What wonder, we should be told there, that of the three things most essential to every Christian, faith, hope, and charity, charity is the greatest and most essential of all!

“Now one main branch of this Christian grace, which extends to a vast variety of particulars; one main branch, which some people improperly consider to be the whole of it, is the going about to do good. And this branch is so magnified in Scripture, that to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction is there called pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father. In short, no religion, or rather pretence of religion, unaccompanied by this spirit of active love and beneficence, will bear the scrutiny of Jesus Christ when he judges us at the last day; and therefore he himself has told us so; and so much stress does he lay upon it, that he seems to make it the only thing about which he will inquire at all, and the only thing which he will reward.

“But observe carefully how he puts the matter. The kind act of charity, whatever it may be, must be done to himself; that is, it must be done in *his* name, and in consequence of *his* command, and to alleviate those sufferings to which *he* was liable in the flesh. For then it will indeed be done to himself, being done to those for whom he died, and whose head he is. The sufferings of all the members are felt by the head; and when any one of them is relieved, even the meanest and most insignificant, the head is relieved too. This is the true doctrine, and this habit, therefore, must be acquired, if we would hear Christ say to us, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father.’ Doing good upon any other principle, although it may be useful to men, and amiable and commendable in their eyes, stands not upon the same high ground; Christ is not the object of it, although it may relieve the sufferings of some of his members; in short, he has nothing whatever to do with it, and he will say to those who intrude into his presence on this plea, ‘Depart from me; I know you not.’

“Now, Graves, I delight myself with thinking and being persuaded, that this charitable act of yours and your wife’s to the afflicted woman upstairs springs from the right Christian principle, and is a habit of goodness formed in you both by the influence of God’s holy spirit. Whether the particular deed which shows the habit be great or small in itself, as men consider greatness or smallness, makes no difference whatever. God looks to the habit, and not to the single work. Nevertheless, I must say what I think, and I say this; that such a work as yours, which you modestly and humbly call a little service, is as great, all things considered, as great can be. It will rank with the very greatest. If that celebrated text is to be understood in any sense of this kind, ‘it will cover a multitude of sins,’ it is applicable to this deed of yours.

“But mistake me not, Graves. Do I mean that a charitable habit, founded upon faith in Christ, will excuse any sins that a man may commit? Drunkenness, for instance, gaming, stealing, lying, slandering?” “No, Sir,” he replied, “*that* you don’t, I am

sure, for I have often heard you preach the very contrary.”—“No,” I said, “assuredly not. The sins which charity will cover, if the text be taken in this sense, are sins of infirmity, sins which are the almost unavoidable consequences of our natural frailty and weakness; sins, however, which so pure and holy a being as God would not excuse, but for Jesus Christ’s sake. But do not rest contented even with these, for these too may be surmounted by the divine aid which is promised us. If in some things we offend all yet the number of them may be lessened. But the hour, I suppose, calls you to your business. I will not detain you any longer. Go, and prosper.” He thanked me a thousand times, bid his wife come down, took up his hat, and went away in haste.

Mrs. Graves came down immediately, and said at once, “I hope you have not been waiting here long, Sir.” “Yes, I have,” I replied; “but my time has been well employed. I have been talking with your husband.” “I am very glad to hear it, Sir,” she said, “and I am quite sure that he will be the better for it.”—“Why, as to that, Mrs. Graves” I answered, “to tell you the truth, I think I am the person most improved by talking with either of you. But tell me, how does your poor friend to-day?” “Ah! Sir,” she said mournfully, “there is a new evil come upon us. She has been lying so long in bed, that she is now full of sores. I have just been dressing them, and there is one in particular which quite frightens me. Mr. Benson has seen it this morning.” “And what does he think of it?” I inquired. “Why, he shook his head sadly,” she answered, “and did not seem to know what to make of it.” “Did he apprehend mortification, do you suppose?” I inquired again. “It is very likely, Sir,” she replied, “for he ordered her to drink Port-wine, if it could be got; and he altered her medicines.” “Port-wine may be got certainly,” I said; “but in what state are her own spirits?” “She is very low, Sir,” was her answer, “very low, indeed. Will you be kind enough to go up to her?” She depended, Sir, upon seeing you to-day.” “Lead the way,” I said, “and let her know, that I am following you immediately.”

Having allowed her a minute or two to prepare Mrs. Whiston for my reception, I then went up, and observed at once a much greater change for the worse than I had expected, even after Mrs. Graves’s desponding language. She will not live many days, I thought with myself; and her own opinion was the same. For as I stood over her with a look of concern, and was in no haste to speak, she said to me, “My strength has declined apace, Sir, in the last six hours.” “Is it any thing more,” I inquired with tenderness, “than the consequence of these sores, which are brought on by so long a confinement to your bed?” “Oh! yes, Sir,” she answered: “the sores trouble me very much, and force me, as you

see, to lie in this inconvenient and painful posture; but I am as weak as water too; and it seemed to come on very suddenly, and it increases fast. God knows, I have been weak enough all along; but this is a different thing. Ah! Sir, my end approaches, pray for me! pray for me, if you please, that I may die in the right faith, and that I be not after all a cast-away!"

This she spoke in a faltering tone, which betrayed great uneasiness of mind. I was afraid that she had been troubled with another attack of her old disorder, and I questioned her directly to that effect; but she answered, "No, Sir, thank God I have been quite free from bad thoughts. Fears, however, I have, very great fears, lest my faith be not of the right kind. Must not I believe, Sir, that my Saviour died for *me* in particular? And can my sins be otherwise forgiven me? Alas! I tremble to think that mine may not be the saving faith after all. I cannot bring myself to believe that my sins are forgiven, and so I dread lest I should die in them."

Thus she expressed her own peculiar state of feeling, which seemed to embrace several important points, the remnant, manifestly of what she had learnt at the conventicle. I attempted to sooth her alarm by saying many obvious things about herself and her condition, but in vain; so I betook myself to the ancient mode which had been so often crowned with success. "Do you suppose, then, my poor friend," I asked, "that the Gospel requires this sort of faith; namely, that we must believe that our sins are forgiven; and that if we have it not, our sins will not be forgiven?" "Yes," she said, "*that* was the idea which has been troubling my mind." "Tell me, then," I said, "whether, in thinking about it, you considered it to be necessary, that all persons whatsoever should have this same belief, in order to secure their salvation." "Oh! yes, Sir," she answered; "it must be as necessary for one as for another." "Then the greatest sinners," I said, "must believe, as well as the best of men, that their sins are forgiven; must they not?"

She was staggered a little at this question, and hesitated how to answer it; so I proceeded. "This doctrine would have a bad effect, I think; for if none can be saved unless they believe that their sins are forgiven, then it will be the duty of all men to believe this, even of the most wicked upon earth; will it not?" "It should seem so, indeed," she said. "Yes," I continued; "and now that you have mentioned the matter to me, it comes to my mind that many of those wretched people who are executed for their crimes, get this same idea, from the mistaken, fanatical teachers who attend upon them in their last days; that is, that Christ died for *them* in particular, and therefore that their sins are forgiven as a matter of course, and consequently that they have nothing to fear; the result of all which is, that they go to death with, what I should call, impieties

and blasphemies on their tongues. But considering the subject soberly, my good Mrs. Whiston, do you think it likely that God, in his just government of the world, should so appoint as that all who believe their sins to be forgiven should actually have them forgiven at once? Is not this notion very foolish and very fanatical?" "Indeed, Sir," she said, "I do not know what to make of it now."

"Well, then," I resumed, "meditate upon it in this manner. We are to believe all that is revealed in the Scriptures; are we not?" "Yes, Sir," she answered. "And whatever is not revealed there, or not deducible from something revealed, we are under no necessity of believing at all; are we?" "No," she replied, "*that* is very clear, Sir." "If that be clear, then," I said, "mention to me any text, if you know any such, in which we are commanded to believe that our sins are forgiven us." Upon this she began to consider with herself, whether she could find any thing to the purpose; and having tried for a long time in vain, she confessed that she could not recollect a single command of that sort. "And for a very good reason," I said, "for there is really none such." "Yes, Sir," she replied suddenly, "but it is just come into my head, that in the Apostles' Creed we say, that we believe in the forgiveness of sins. Is not *that* the same thing?" "No, indeed," I answered, "it is widely different. You say, in the same place, that you believe in the communion of saints, and do you therefore think yourself commanded to believe that you are yourself a saint, and in communion with the rest of the saints?" "No, Sir," she replied immediately, "I neither think myself a saint, nor that I am commanded to believe myself to be a saint. I am not so presumptuous, Sir; and I am sure that I could never bring myself to believe such a thing." "Very well," I said; "but you say also that you believe the life everlasting. Do you therefore consider yourself commanded to believe that you yourself shall rise to the life everlasting?" "No, Sir, nor that either," she answered eagerly. "Are you aware," I asked, "that there are many people in this wicked world who do not believe that there will be another life after the present?" "I have heard so," she answered; "but it is very surprising to me." "Very well, then," I said, when we repeat that passage in the Creed, we profess that we are of a contrary opinion; we profess our belief of an everlasting life to succeed the present short one; but we profess no belief, whatever with respect to ourselves personally, or what our own lot may be hereafter; still less do we mean, that we cannot inherit everlasting life ourselves, unless we believe that we shall do so. Do you comprehend me?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied; "I think I do, but perhaps not perfectly; yet I can apply what you say to the other things, the com-

munion of saints and the forgiveness of sins. I understand now, that, in professing our belief of these things, we go no further than the general doctrine that there are such things; but still I have always been taught that we must apply them to ourselves, to make them useful to us. How is this, Sir?" "So you must," I said, "but the application is very different from what you imagine. For instance, you believe that there is an everlasting life to come hereafter, according to the words of the Creed; but believing this, then you begin to apply it to yourself; that is, it spurs you on, and makes you think in what way you yourself may be able to obtain it; and having learnt from Scripture how this is to be done, you set about it with all the spirit which so glorious a prize demands. Again, you believe that there is a blissful communion and fellowship between all the blessed spirits and just men made perfect, and every faithful servant of Christ; and this belief spurs you on, and makes you wish to belong to so excellent a company, of which Christ himself is the head. You search the Scriptures, therefore, to see what qualifications will fit you for such a heavenly society, and you strive with all your might to acquire them. This is the way of applying the doctrine to yourself. It is the same with respect to the forgiveness of sins; need I explain it at length, as I have done the other cases?" "No, Sir," she said, "I hope there is no occasion for so much trouble." "Then," I rejoined, "as you are neither commanded in Scripture to believe that your own sins are forgiven, nor do you profess any such thing in the Creed, you seem to be perplexing and troubling yourself to no purpose. But undoubtedly you must apply the delightful doctrine of forgiveness to your own case; that is, you must be spurred on, by reflecting upon it, to do what Christ commanded you to do, in order to obtain forgiveness; and then you may be assured that you will obtain it. But to begin with believing at once that you have already obtained it, is a most preposterous method indeed. Do you think that God will be deceived by any man's arrogant assumptions, and really grant him forgiveness, merely because he assumes it? Will not God know whether the conditions, have been performed or not, and decide accordingly, whatever the man himself may believe? What has the man's belief about himself to do with the decisions of infinite, unerring justice?"

Thus I turned and twisted the argument into various shapes, in the hope that in some shape or other it might be adapted to her comprehension; but though she manifestly understood a great deal of it, yet she still seemed somewhat uneasy and dissatisfied with herself; so I began again in this manner. "Your husband is gone to work for Mr. Markham; what has Mr. Markham promised to give him by the week?" "His wages," she answered, "are to be twelve shillings." "And will he get these wages," I inquired,

“whether he works more or less; the whole day, or half a day; six days, or five days?” “Oh! no, Sir,” she replied, “he must work the whole day, and all the six days, to get the twelve shillings.” “There is a covenant, then,” I said, “or bargain between them; is there not? On the one side is the promise of the wages, on the other a certain quantity of work to be done.” “*That* is it exactly, Sir,” she answered. “And your husband knows perfectly that, without doing the work, he can put in no claim to the wages?” “He is quite certain of it,” she replied. “And when the time comes for paying the wages, what rule will Mr. Markham go by? Will he go by any other rule than the doing of the work?” “By no other, certainly,” she answered. “So that if your husband should be so foolish as to claim the wages on any other ground, Mr. Markham would most probably remind him of the bargain, and stick to it closely, and reject every plea inconsistent with it?” “There can be no doubt of it,” she replied.

“Well, then,” I said, “now tell me whether you do not think forgiveness of sins to be most excellent wages.” “Yes, indeed,” she answered; “happy should I be if I could get them!” “And God is the person who promises these wages; is he not?” She assented. “And he promises them, for Christ’s sake, to all mankind; does he not?” She assented again. “Without conditions?” I inquired. “No, Sir” she said, “not without conditions. We have a work to perform too.” “Yes I rejoined, “not to mention, at present, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, repentance towards God is required on our parts for one thing; is it not?” “It is, certainly,” she said. “Then,” I asked, “without this work of repentance which is difficult enough to some people, have we any right to expect the promised wages, even forgiveness of our sins?” “Indeed, it seems not,” she said. “If we were so foolish as to claim them on any other ground, exclusive of this, would not God remind us of the covenant, and cast us out with indignation?” She allowed that he might justly do so. “And he would not listen for a moment, would he? to any presumptuous person, who should intrude into his presence, and say, I have made up my mind to think, and be assured, that you will give me these wages at any rate?” She confessed that there was no probability of it.

“Well, then,” I said, “now you can have no difficulty, I should suppose, in applying all this to your own case; and it is plain that your fear about not believing the forgiveness of your sins is an idle and useless fear. Indeed, how can any man believe that his sins are forgiven, unless he believes also that he has performed the conditions, one of which is repentance? In short, if he does not repent, he must believe that his sins are not forgiven. The true fear, therefore, respects the performance of the conditions, and

especially this business of repentance; whether we have truly repented at all, and whether we have repented sufficiently. I have talked to you on that subject before, and I hoped that I had quieted all your doubts about the sincerity and the sufficiency of your repentance. Strictly speaking, no man's repentance can be sufficient, considered by itself; but it may be sincere, and God, for Christ's sake, may consider it to be sufficient also. At all events; this is what we must look to, and nothing else will avail without it. Aided by the Holy Spirit, strengthened by our faith in Jesus Christ, we must make our repentance more and more perfect; and then, whether we believe our sins to be forgiven or not, (for *that* is nothing to the purpose,) we shall certainly be forgiven in the end, and receive the wages, eternal life."

My poor patient began now to be very much comforted, and she showed it visibly in her countenance. Her brow was expanded, and her eye sparkled. In a moment she said, "Oh! thank you, Sir! thank you again, and again, for the great pains which you take to set my poor, ignorant, doubting mind at ease. Indeed, Sir, when we are going to die, it is fit enough that we should look into every corner of our hearts, and make all right, if we can, before the last struggle, which will be enough of itself to engage all our thoughts. It will be too late then to begin to learn what we must believe, and what we must do." "It will, in truth," I replied; "so I beg that you will not forbear to tell me whatever troubles and perplexes you that I may try to explain it."

"Ah, Sir," she said, "you are very kind, and I should like to hear something more from you about my believing that Christ is *my* Saviour, and that I am one for whom he died. At Sion Chapel, Sir, I heard that language continually; and I am sure that all the ministers who preach there would charge me with a sad want of faith, if they knew that I could not bring myself to have a lively sense of those things; and more especially if they knew that I doubted about them. All doubting, Sir, in such cases, they would call the sin of unbelief. But if I understand you rightly, Sir, I may doubt, and yet be saved?"

Most certainly you may," I replied. This is not the sort of doubting, which proves a person to be without faith; that is, a person may very well doubt about his condition, and yet believe every thing revealed in Scripture respecting Jesus Christ and the terms of salvation. I approve of doubting, which betokens humility, rather than of assurance, which too often betokens only a presumptuous confidence. In short, if confidence and assurance were faith, then the wicked, being worked up to this pitch, might be more perfect believers than the good, or rather the wicked might be the only true believers, and go to heaven; whilst the good are but in-

fidels, and must be condemned to hell. Is not this too extravagant to suppose?"

"It is more, Sir," she said, "it is horrible!" "Yes," I rejoined; "but nothing of this sort is to be found in the word of God. All this is of man's invention and making, and all the phrases by which it is expressed. It is no true belief in Christ, or any part of it, to be persuaded in our own minds, that he is *our* Saviour in particular; that *we* are those for whom he died to purchase salvation; or that *we* are righteous, because he was righteous; but that he came into the world to reconcile sinners to God, and to redeem the whole fallen race of mankind from eternal punishment. This is what we must believe, and we can only make such a belief applicable to our own particular benefit, by becoming his faithful disciples, and obeying his commands. And could we but be satisfied in our consciences, that we *do* obey his commands, and rank amongst his faithful disciples, then indeed, there would be no longer any room for doubt, and we might have the full assurance of hope.—But this assurance is not faith itself; it is the effect of faith, the blessed fruit of it. Nor is it any part of our duty; it is a wonderful comfort and happiness to us, but it is no duty of our religion, or condition of our salvation. So, on the contrary, if we cannot arrive at this blessed assurance, although we earnestly endeavour to be Christ's faithful disciples—this is no sin; no, nor even defect of faith; it is a defect of judgment, perhaps, and it is certainly our unhappiness. But whatever unhappy notions we may entertain with respect to ourselves, will God be deceived too?" "No, Sir," she exclaimed with animation, "no, indeed,—he will see to the very bottom of our hearts; he will see us as we are, not as we suppose ourselves to be; and he cannot be mistaken, whether our faith and obedience are such as to entitle us to his glorious promises or not."

It gave me great pleasure to hear her say this, and I was now satisfied, that she both understood me, and that her ill-grounded scruples would no longer disturb her peace. However, before I left her, I made this short recapitulation of the argument. "It is often expressly commanded in the Gospel," I said, "both that we should believe, and that we should repent; but it is no where commanded, that we should believe ourselves to be true believers, or true penitents. To doubt, therefore, whether we are so is not unbelief. Again, to true believers and true penitents, certain promises are made by one who cannot lie; and these promises we must apply to ourselves; but how? Why, as motives and encouragements to us to become true believers and true penitents; not as if any vain persuasion of our own minds were necessary to obtain them. Remember this, then, and now I will pray with you;" which having done, I bid her farewell.

The poor woman being now, as I thought, manifestly approaching to her latter end with rapid steps, I was the more diligent in my attendance upon her, and I administered the Sacrament to her a second time. Nothing seemed now to remain upon her mind to disturb it. Every doubt and difficulty, I believe, had been completely banished, and, assured herself that her death was at hand, she waited for it with calmness, with firmness, and with humility. In short, all her preparations were made; her mind was drawn off from this world; and, without any other care, she watched for the coming of her Lord.

In this state of things her husband, anxious, I suppose, by a great exertion, and an unusual display of affection for her, to retrieve his former neglect, fetched a physician from the neighbouring town to see her. His opinion, upon what foundations I could never discover, was favourable in a high degree; and he told, not only her friends, but herself also, that so far from being in any immediate danger of death, she was more likely to recover altogether.

I had always observed, in the beginning of my parochial labours, that medical men of every description were extremely averse to intimate to their patients any uncertainty of their life, or to mention the propriety of summoning the clergyman to the sick bed. I attributed this, in part, but erroneously, I hope, to the want of a sufficient regard in themselves for the subject of religion; and, in part, to the fear which they might be supposed to entertain, lest the feelings of their patients might be shocked, and the benefit of their medicines diminished or destroyed by any measure which tended to excite an apprehension in the sick that their case was hopeless. However, by degrees, I brought the medical men of my own parish to think differently. At first, I prevailed upon them to call me in, to the poor at least, under the pretence of supplying them with such nourishing things as their cases might require; and, at length, as no bad coadjutor in healing their disorders. In fact, the most usual effect of my ministrations was to sooth and tranquilize their minds, on such grounds as the gospel points out to us. The sick performed duties which they had never performed before; they were conscious of better thoughts and better desires; and thus they became comparatively easy, and more at peace in their own breasts, and, consequently, I was assured, more open to the salutary powers of medicine.

So, it appeared, the practitioners within the verge of my influence were ultimately well convinced; and they acted accordingly. But the stranger, I presume, adhered to the old maxim, and his conduct was very mischievous to all of us; but especially to the sick person herself. I saw her very soon after his visit; and, instead of that serenity of repose in which she lay before, submis-

sive and resigned to her Maker's will, and expecting every hour to meet her Judge, I now observed a strange flurry and fluttering of her spirits : her soul, which had almost taken its flight to another region, was entangled again in this ; the cares of this life again forced themselves upon her notice, and, as it seemed, with an unusual vehemence. Indeed it might well be so, for she considered herself like one newly risen from the grave, and as having a new existence to begin.

I was myself in great doubt how to act. I had not seen Mr. Benson, and it was unreasonable for me singly to appear to distrust the judgment of the physician, which was very positively pronounced, and thus to dash to the ground the hopes of those who surrounded the sick-bed. I contented myself, therefore, with making for the present some common observation upon this sudden, unexpected change in her prospects. "Certainly," I said, "it seemed to *me*, my good Mrs. Whiston, that God was about to take you to himself. But he has granted you, perhaps, to the prayers of your afflicted husband ; and, without doubt, he has some merciful object in view. You have glorified him, I think, by your patience under sickness, and by your preparations for death ; you will glorify him still more, I hope, by your life."

"Ah! Sir," she replied, "how is all this? It is against my own opinion. I feel myself sinking more and more ; but the joy of my husband and of good Mrs. Graves, and their confidence in my recovery, force me, whether I will or no, to think as they do. But this new doctor, Sir, is he, indeed, to be believed? If he was afraid to tell me that I must die, he does not know me, Sir ; he has mistaken my character. Blessed be God! by *his* help, and by your instructions, Sir, and trusting in my Redeemer, I was better prepared to die, than I am now to live. But God's will be done! He can scatter at once all the gloomy cares which are gathering fast and thick about me. First, in any case, as my recovery must needs be long, (for why should I expect another signal mercy?) I shall be a great burden to my dear Mrs. Graves here, and to my poor husband, and I am troubled with thinking in what way I may be able to lighten it. Ah! Sir, the world is getting hold of me again, after I had cast it off. I shall be the seed sown amongst the thorns, I fear; for all the good which I had gotten by affliction is beginning to be choked and destroyed already. My head swims with a thousand thoughts of what I may be called upon to do."

Before I could answer her, first Mrs. Graves, and then her husband, with a warmth of feeling to which he had seemed hitherto a stranger, both cried out, that they wished for her recovery beyond all things ; and that any thing which they could do to promote it would be no burden, but the greatest pleasure. At the same time, one after the other, they took her by the hand affec-

tionately, and attempted to comfort her by every possible endearing look and gesture. But a tumult of mingled sentiments had arisen in her breast, which it was not so easy to assuage. Prayer, I thought, might, perhaps, be the most effectual remedy. I proposed it, and all assenting, we were immediately upon our knees around her.

I opened a prayer-book, rather at a loss where to find any thing precisely suitable to the peculiar circumstances of the case. My eye was caught immediately by the prayer at the end of the Communion service, which invokes Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, as knowing our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, to have compassion upon our infirmities, and to vouchsafe to give us what we might forbear to ask, either because we were too blind to see that it was for our good, or too unworthy to dare to ask it, although persuaded of our own want. I read this first, and was very well satisfied with the effect of it; and as, on a former occasion, I had found two or three prayers in Paley, from Patrick, Stonehouse, Jenks, and Kettlewell, which appeared to succeed much better than others, not taken from the Liturgy, had generally done, I now wished for Paley again; but, on my return home, having looked over the pages, to see if there were any such prayer as I desired, I met with none very applicable to the purpose. However, being left at the instant of need to my own resources, I betook myself, as usual, to the Psalms; and, having fallen accidentally upon two pages which presented the 17th, and portions of the 16th and 18th, I glanced over some passages, which, I thought, would do admirably; and, therefore, without any further search, *there* I fixed, and began at once with the 1st verse of the 18th, in which I made no alteration. After this I proceeded as follows:—

“The sorrows of death compassed me; the pains of hell came about me; the snares of death overtook me. In my trouble I called upon the Lord, which is worthy to be praised, and he heard my voice out of his holy heaven, and my prayer came before him, and entered even into his ears. O God, thou hast tried and visited mine heart in the night-season; I will thank thee for giving me warning; O hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. Show thy marvellous kindness, thou that art the Saviour of them which put their trust in thee. O keep me as the apple of an eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from all my spiritual enemies, and from all the dangers and temptations of a wicked world! I will set thee always before me; thou shalt show me the path of life; thou shalt maintain my lot; and therefore I shall not fall.”

Having thus exhausted the two pages, I turned over to the following one, and resumed the thread of my ideas in this manner.

“Thou shalt send down from on high to deliver me out of many troubles; for I will keep thy ways, and not forsake my God, as the wicked do. I will have an eye unto all thy laws, and will not cast out thy commandments from me. Thou also shalt light my candle; the Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light; he is the defender of all them that put their trust in him. For who is God but the Lord; or who hath any strength except our God? Thou wilt give me the defence of thy salvation; thy right hand also shall hold me up; and thy loving correction shall make me great. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my strong helper, and praised be the God of my salvation!”

Two more pages were now exhausted; and, my poor patient being in a dreadful state of feebleness, I attempted nothing further; but, pronouncing the Lord's prayer and the benediction at the end of the Visitation-service, I hurried away, leaving them all, as I was myself, in tears.

Early the next morning, before I was dressed, a messenger came in haste to fetch me to the same scene. I hurried after, and took Paley with me, expecting something extraordinary. William Graves was in the room below, and his countenance marked a deep concern. From the room above I heard loud wailings. “What is the matter, Graves!” I exclaimed eagerly. With difficulty he answered, that Mrs. Whiston was dying. I rushed up stairs, and the expectation of seeing me repressed for a moment their lamentations. The husband and Mrs. Graves were supporting on each side the dying woman. He would have burst forth immediately upon seeing me, as I saw by his gestures, into some impatient exclamation of sorrow, and perhaps would have foolishly murmured against the dispensations of the Almighty; but I beckoned to him with my hand to be silent, and at the same time with a sterner look I signified my disapprobation of his conduct. Upon this he curbed his reluctant spirit, but not without manifest pain, and the utmost difficulty.

I now observed the poor woman herself. She was gasping for breath, and apparently very near the last agony. However, she lifted up her eyes towards me with an inexpressible mixture of various feelings; and, being still in possession of her intellect, she seemed to implore my prayers. To speak I was unable; to pray I might at least endeavour. So I fell upon my knees, and the rest did the same—her sister, William Graves, and two or three women, whose countenances I had not time to recognise.

I read first the commendatory prayer, as it stands in Paley. She had closed her eyes, but still continued to breathe. Her left hand was within my reach; I took it into mine, and pressed it gently. She did the same, and opened her eyes convulsively. Her husband and sister cried out, but Mrs. Graves having disenga-

ged one of her own hands, closed her friend's eyes again with great judgment and tenderness. This was a trying scene to all of us.

After a pause of no long duration, having rallied my strength, and being convinced that she was yet sensible, I turned to the following page, and began Bishop Andrews's Litany for a sick person at the time of departure ; but, in proceeding with it, I retained only what was strictly applicable. She was now fetching the last sigh, so I concluded the whole with Bishop Cosins's form of recommending the soul to God. Before I had quite finished it, every spark of life had fled.

For a few moments they all watched the corpse in deep silence, as if it were impossible to believe that she was dead. When the fact became too evident, a tumult of woe seemed upon the point of breaking out, but I anticipated it by exclaiming, " Listen to *me*," and immediately I read aloud the consolatory sentences which are collected together at page 446 ; then, omitting the burial psalm, I went through the following prayers to the end.

The effect appearing to answer my wishes, I rose from my knees, and departed in great comfort.

CHAPTER III.

MR. COMPTON—SCEPTICISM.

§ 1.—MR. COMPTON, MR. AND MRS. HARRISON.

HAVING observed a gentleman and lady at church two or three Sundays in succession, both morning and afternoon, sitting sometimes in one pew and sometimes in another, as the pew-openers were able to accommodate them, I inquired who they were, and found them to be a Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, then on a visit to Mr. Compton, who was Mrs. Harrison's brother, and who had a handsome villa in my parish. This information, and the appearance of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison themselves, together with the regularity of their attendance at church, suggested a hope to me, that through their means I might get at Mr. Compton, who had hitherto shunned all my advances, and kept aloof from any sort of acquaintance with me, from the consciousness of his own profligacy, and the total absence of all desire to change his mode of life and character.

Whilst I was deliberating upon this subject, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison came together to the Rectory; and after the first salutations were over, Mr. Harrison having stated his wish to have some private conversation with me, I left Mrs. Harrison under the care of Mrs. Warton, and retired with him into the Shrubbery. Here he opened to me at large the lamentable case of his brother-in-law. He was a man of considerable fortune, who had held an office under the government. Unmarried himself, he had lived chiefly with unmarried men, and without any restraint as to manners and conversation. A mistress was, of course, a part of his establishment. He condemned the Christian religion, because it condemned *him*, and because he knew nothing of it but the objections against it. To himself and his companions it was the theme of many a scoff, and since he had been in my parish he had never joined in any of its sacred rites. He could not, indeed, well have done so without a terrible

disturbance of his opinions and practices. But he had no wish even to set an example of going to church; and thus, there being nothing to bring him there, and much to keep him away, it seemed likely, without some special interference of Providence, that he might have gone on uninterruptedly in the broad way to destruction.

However, a grievous sickness surprised him in the midst of his career, when he appeared to have health, and strength, and length of days before him. In an instant he lost the use of all his lower limbs. He was stretched, as he supposed, on the bed of death. There was no creature about him that had any affection for him. He reflected; and he was humbled. He longed for the tender care and consolations of his sister; he adapted his family to her reception, and she came to him, together with her husband, with all the speed in their power. After their arrival he seemed to mend, and could move about on crutches. Nor had he turned a deaf ear to their gentle insinuations about religion; but, on the contrary, in consequence of what they had said to him of my preaching, he had expressed a desire of coming to church, if a pew could be found for him suitable to his present circumstances. And this, therefore, was the inquiry which Mr. Harrison had now visited me to make.

Fortunately I was able to do them this service. There was a pew near one of the doors on the ground-floor, the usual occupiers of which were absent. I assigned it to them, and on the following Sunday morning, to my great satisfaction, I saw Mr. Compton in it. His carriage had brought him to the church-gates, and from thence, with the help of a servant and his crutches, he had hobbled to his seat. This he did two or three times, but the fatigue of it was so very severe, that, after such a trial, he was compelled to relinquish any further attempt. What had been the effect upon his mind I could not precisely ascertain. It seemed, from his sister's account, that he had been struck with the appearance of a full church, and of so much earnestness and devotion in the congregation, and he had thought, perhaps, within himself, that there might be more truth in the matter than he was yet aware of; for why should so many people be mistaken, and he only and his companions in the right? The clergyman, indeed, had been educated for the purpose, and might be said to depend for his maintenance upon the upholding of the Christian religion; but this suspicion attached scarcely to any body else. However, mere custom and habit, and early prepossession, would account for a great deal; they were so brought up, and now they continued in it without reasoning about it at all. In short, as Mrs. Harrison thought, her brother was at this time a confirmed sceptic, and she was extremely anxious that I should see him and talk to him.

I was quite ready; so I called, under the pretence of returning Mr. Harrison's visits, and also of asking Mr. Compton himself how he was, after his painful exertions to attend church. I was taken at once into the room where he happened to be, and where Mr. and Mrs. Harrison were sitting with him. At first he was very much flurried, and my appearance seemed to be both unexpected and disagreeable to him; but by degrees we fell into conversation, and every token of unpleasant feeling entirely vanished. Not a word, however, to the great purpose of my visit could for a long time be hooked into the other topics; but at length a little opening having presented itself, Mrs. Harrison, who had been watching for it in silence, interposed and said, "We have not told you, Dr. Warton, how much we have been all pleased with your church and your congregation." "Yes," added Mr. Compton, "but one thing surprised me; that you still continue to read the Athanasian Creed in these liberal and enlightened times." This had been done on Easter-Sunday, which was one of the days on which Mr. Compton was at church.

Here was a beginning of his own seeking. It seemed to me to matter but little how we began, provided that we had time to finish. At all events I hoped soon to arrive at something useful. So I said in answer to them both at once, "We pride ourselves upon adhering closely to the Rubric. The minister and the congregation are equally satisfied with the old trodden paths, and we think ourselves most secure when we are in them. But whatever the congregation might think, I act under authority myself, and should no more venture to omit the Athanasian Creed on the Sunday appointed for the reading of it, than a soldier would venture to quit his post upon active service." "It is very true, Sir," said Mr. Harrison, "in every thing of that kind, the line of the minister's duty is exactly prescribed to him, and I do not see how he can conscientiously swerve from it. But I suppose my brother Compton intended to speak generally, and not to insinuate that any particular clergyman had the power to do as he pleased." "What I wonder at," said Mr. Compton, "is this; that all the clergy by common consent do not leave it off, now that they know better. I am very well aware that it is not so easy a matter to alter a rule of the church; but many things become obsolete in the lapse of years, and it is a pity that the Athanasian Creed has not shared the same fate long ago."

"You must excuse me, Sir," I said; "I am of a very different opinion, and should be grieved to lose it. There is an astonishing dignity and majesty about it, which commands the reverence of mankind. It is a most awful declaration of a most awful doctrine, and it explains the doctrine itself in a most rational, consistent, and probable manner. Some of the heresies indeed, against which it

was intended to guard, have fallen to the ground, never perhaps to rise again; and therefore the particular parts aimed at those heresies might now seem to be useless. But the Creed, taken together, makes a whole, so grand and sublime, that it would be very bad taste to maim and mutilate it by the abstraction of any of its parts. The antiquity of it, too, is so great, that its very age makes it venerable, and almost a crime to touch it. But, what is of most importance, it is truly a scriptural production, being deduced logically from Scripture itself."

"However all this may be, Sir," he replied, "very eminent men in their respective ages would have been glad to be rid of it. I believe *that* was the expression used by the great Archbishop Tillotson himself." "Yes," I said, "for the sake of peace, and of bringing back the non-conformists into the bosom of the church, the Archbishop and others would have sacrificed, or altered, some few things in our services; and this creed was one. Not that they themselves objected to it; but that the dissenters objected to it, and demanded the surrender of it as the price of uniformity. Uniformity amongst Christians would be a most glorious consummation; and men might well consent to change or even abandon human expressions and explanations for it. But it would be going too far to insinuate that those excellent men differed from the Athanasian Creed in doctrine. In fact, the event showed that they did not. For, if they had, they might have got rid of it very plausibly, in the first instance under pretence of conciliating the persons with whom they were engaged in discussion. No, no: this was far from their intention; and accordingly, we find that this Creed has survived all the discussions of the learned, and all the revisions and alterations of our services recorded in our church history. A powerful criterion of its inestimable value!"

"But it is so intolerant, Sir," he exclaimed hastily, "and so illiberal; so ill-suited to the enlarged spirit of the times! Why, let me ask you, do you not accuse the Catholics, and lay it to their charge, as an eternal bar against their admission to equal political privileges with you, that they deny salvation to all who are without their own pale? And what do they more than you yourselves do in this Creed, and in one of your articles? is not *your* system equally exclusive?" Then, triumphing in his fancied superiority, he added, that he believed this was the case with all persons who were fond of creeds; that they were so bigoted as to be fully persuaded in their minds, that nobody could be saved, except in their own peculiar, exclusive way.

In reply to this, I began with asking him to point out to me that article of ours in which we exclude from salvation those who do not belong to the English Episcopal Church; "For I confess," I said, "That I do not recollect any such article." Mr. Harrison

also, who professed to have read the articles very recently, expressed the same doubt whether any such article existed. Upon which, Mr. Compton exclaimed, "Then bring me the great prayer book immediately. You see how helpless I am myself to-day." The poor man was lying at his length on a sofa, and could not stir without a great deal of assistance; not even to turn from one side to the other. Yet he spoke with considerable energy and vivacity. He was a warm friend, it seemed, to the Catholic question, but he liked still better to fix a slur, if he could, on the religion of his country and his ancestors.

The prayer-book, which he had called for, was put into his hands, and he fumbled it about for some time without finding any thing to his purpose. At length he pitched upon the 18th Article and cried out, "Εὐρηκα, εὐρηκα! I have it here. Do you not assert in this Article, that *they* are to be held accursed, who maintain, that all persons following the light of nature, and the laws of their own sect, may be saved by it, whatsoever it may be?" Undoubtedly we do," I answered, "unless they lay their foundation in Jesus Christ; for Scripture positively declares, that there is no other name under heaven, whereby men may be saved. But, after all, this might appear to be a question between *us* and the heathens only; not between *us* and other Christian churches. The Roman Catholics affirm, that none can be saved out of their own church of Rome, neither heathens, nor Christians. We affirm in this Article, generally, that it is impious to maintain, that there is any salvation except through Jesus Christ. So far, therefore, as this Article is concerned, we exclude no Christian from salvation, to whatever particular church he may belong, if he hold the great fundamental principal. At all events, then, we are not so illiberal as your friends, the Catholics. For if we are illiberal at all, it is only towards the poor heathens; but in fact, we are not illiberal even towards *them*. For, the Article being rightly interpreted, we hold those only accursed, who, having had the Gospel made known to them, assert nevertheless, that it is unnecessary to salvation. Our Lord himself said, that the unbelievers should be condemned at the last day; but, of course, he meant those who were wilfully so; those who, having life and death put before them, chose death. The same restriction is implied in our Article."

"Brother Compton," said Mr. Harrison, "you must give up this point, you have no ground to stand upon." "Well, well!" he exclaimed; "then let Dr. Warton come back to the Athanasian Creed, and see whether I have any ground to stand upon *there*." "Certainly," I said, "I think you have none; if you mean, out of that Creed, to charge us with holding an exclusive doctrine, as we charge the Roman Catholics, generally, with doing so. We affirm in that Creed, that all persons who wish to be saved must

think of the Trinity in Unity, after a certain manner; not simply as the English church thinks of it, or because the English church has any particular view of it; but because the universal church of Christ once so thought of it, and settled the point for ages to come. In fact, to speak more properly, we, of this church of England affirm nothing at all of ourselves. It is the Creed which affirms whatever is affirmed; and the Creed is not *our* work, but the work of the age in which it was drawn up. We indeed have adopted it into our ritual, as being consistent with Scripture, and with the sentiments of the whole Christian world in remote times. But we do not presume ourselves to anathematize any body who may think differently. The Creed itself, certainly, admonishes all nominal, pretending Christians of their danger, if they interpret the doctrine differently from the declared sense of the universal church. We take the Creed, and, of course, those admonitions which make a part of it; and it seems to me that it would be ridiculous, at this time of day, to expunge them. In fact, to do so would be the same as to say, that we agreed with the early Christians about the interpretation of the doctrine; but disagreed with them as to the danger of those who impugned, or perverted it. Now see, then, how little comparison there is between *us* and the Catholics. It stands shortly thus: they exclude from salvation all who are not in their own Roman church, and especially *us* Protestants. We have adopted a Creed, which denounces the usual scriptural penalty against those who pervert an important scriptural doctrine. How does the matter strike you now?"

Mr. Compton not answering immediately, Mr. Harrison said, that it had always appeared to *him* to be quite absurd to compare the two churches in this manner; the church of Rome being notoriously intolerant, and the church of England renowned for the contrary disposition. And then he added, "if there be any ground of accusation with respect to this Creed, it lies equally against both the churches, for they both adopt it; but nobody ever thought of accusing the Catholics of intolerance on this account. Why then *us*? It might, perhaps, be a question, how far it discovers a want of charity, first, in the framers of the Creed, and, secondly, in the adopters of it, for denouncing, either directly or by implication, so severe a penalty against those who disapprove of the Athanasian interpretation, which is but a *human* interpretation, of the doctrine of the Trinity."

"Perhaps," I said, turning to Mr. Harrison, "you may not be aware, that we do not consider the penalty as attaching to the lengthened explanation, description, or illustration of the doctrine, which forms the body of the work; but only to the simple doctrine itself, as it is stated in the beginning, and repeated afterwards when the penalty is introduced. I will open the Prayer-book to the Creed

itself, and you will understand me better. See here, in the 3rd and 4th verses, it is said, ‘the Catholic faith is this; that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.’ Here, I say, we have the true doctrine stated, simply, and in the manner that every Christian is bound to believe it. But it is evident that this brief outline may be filled up in various ways; and the compilers of the Athanasian Creed have done it most admirably in the following twenty-two verses, which I called the explanation, description, or illustration of the general doctrine. If any man can fill up the parts by a more rational, consistent, and probable explanation, embracing at the same time a refutation of all the heresies which have arisen respecting the Trinity, he is welcome to do it; and they who like his explanation may take it, without fear of incurring the penalty denounced. But I myself think it impossible; and such, I imagine, is almost the universal opinion. However, after these twenty-two verses, you observe, the practical statement of the simple doctrine is resumed; and then follows the penalty, which attaches to that statement only. For, after the explanation is finished, the whole question is summed up in this manner: ‘So that in all things, as is aforesaid’—that is, as was said in the beginning—‘the Unity, in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped; he, therefore, that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.’ The great caution is, that we should beware of confounding the Persons, which are so clearly distinguished in Scripture, and of dividing the Substance, which both Scripture and reason make to be but one. Adhere to this view, and worship the Deity under this form; and then whatever other notions you may entertain of the Trinity, you are guiltless.”

“Well, but,” exclaimed M. Compton, who had been listening with his whole attention, “these twenty-two verses are a pretty long-winded parenthesis, Dr. Warton; are they not?” This little witticism occasioned a smile in the faces of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison and Mr. Compton himself quite chuckled at his own *jeu d’esprit*. But to *me* it was no novelty; so I replied, without being decomposed for a moment; “Call those verses what you please, Sir. In fact, they resemble the demonstration of a mathematical proposition which may happen to admit of several modes of proof. Taking the whole process together, first comes the statement of the matter to be proved; then the form of demonstration which the author selects; and, lastly, the original proposition is now stated again as proved and determined. What is of consequence to *you* for practice, is the matter finally settled; namely, that the three angles of a triangle, suppose, are equal to two right angles; the mode of proof, if there be different modes, is quite immaterial. Thus it is, then, here; we have a doctrine put simply, and an explanation afterwards

at length; and then a conclusion in favour of the original doctrine. To this alone, as being alone of importance, the penalty is annexed. Have I made myself at all intelligible?"

"Yes, yes," answered Mr. Harrison, "I understand you perfectly; but I admire the explanation so much, as to be unwilling to give it up, or lessen its authority." "I agree with you, Sir," I said, "and you already know my opinion about it. And, no doubt, it will maintain its place, as long as the doctrine of the Trinity is acknowledged to be a doctrine of the Gospel, with all the authority which it had at the first, after the extinction of the Arian heresy, and with all the authority which it has since acquired in the Christian world. But by limiting the damnatory clauses to the mere doctrine as stated in the 3rd and 4th verses, and resumed in the 27th, we take away all reasonable grounds for the charge of being uncharitable. For no one, surely, will say that it is uncharitable to pronounce an anathema in any case whatever, liberal as the age may be. In short, there are credenda as well as agenda, and Scripture pronounces an anathema against vicious belief as well as against vicious practice. If the rulers of the church, therefore, were to endeavour to conceal these denunciations, by carefully omitting them in all their formularies of worship, it might be called liberality; but in truth, it would be mere squeamishness, or rather a shameful neglect of the souls of men. I once met with a lady of high rank, who complained of a want of delicacy in a clergyman, who, in his great office of preaching, had wounded her ears with the frequent mention of the devil and hell. But that clergyman might well have said, like St. Paul, 'Madam, I know the terrors of the Lord, and, therefore, I would persuade you, if it were possible, to renounce your vicious pleasures and selfish indulgencies.' So stands the matter, then. If a right faith be necessary to salvation as well as a right practice, which Scripture asserts, the people must be told so, and the certainty of the thing must be constantly brought before their eyes. To do this is the true charity; to act otherwise would be downright uncharitableness. But, then, the denunciations should stop were Scripture stops. I would not apply them to any elaborate system, however scriptural, and deduced from Scripture by logical inference; but only to Scripture itself, or to that which, in the chain of reasoning, is the very next link to it. Now you have the whole of my ideas upon this controverted subject."

"And I for one," said Mr. Harrison, "am infinitely obliged to you for the trouble which you have taken to set the thing in a new light before us. What do *you* think, brother Compton?" "Why, I think," replied the sick man, "that Dr. Warton has certainly removed some of the objections against the Athanasian Creed, by showing, that we are not bound to believe, under pain

of damnation, all that incomprehensible explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, which you are both of you pleased to call so admirable and so sublime. I am right in saying 'incomprehensible;' for you know that the Creed itself uses the same term." "Yes; but does it use that term in the same sense that you use it now?" I asked. "What other sense can the term possibly have?" he answered. "Why, undoubtedly," I said, "the Godhead is incomprehensible in your own sense, at least by man. Man can never find out God to perfection. He is unfathomable by our scanty line. But the Creed meant nothing of this sort. The real meaning is, that each of the Persons of the Trinity is unbounded by any limits of space or time, and fills the universal creation at every instant with his actual presence and influence, and will fill it to all eternity."

My antagonist was piqued at this discovery of his ignorance, as I manifestly perceived; and chiefly, as I thought, because Mr. Harrison was by, whom he appeared to *me* rather to affect to despise. But he turned the matter off with pretended good humour, and said, "Well, Dr. Warton, if you deny me the word 'incomprehensible,' I shall adopt the word 'unintelligible,' which, I presume, I am in no danger of mistaking." "We shall see presently," I replied; "but, pray tell me, whether you apply the word 'unintelligible' to the Creed itself, or to the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, which is the subject of the Creed?" This question puzzled him, and for some time he was at a loss what to answer; but at length he summoned courage enough to assert, that it amounted to the same thing. "Pardon me," I said, "there is a great and a clear difference. Suppose I were to affirm, that two lines, prolonged indefinitely according to a certain law, should continually approach nearer and nearer to each other, and, in short, should approach so near as to be within a smaller distance than the wit of man could assign, and yet should never be capable of meeting; the proposition, I should think, paradoxical as it might seem, would still be intelligible to you; although, perhaps, you are not mathematician enough to pronounce upon the truth of it, and much less to demonstrate it." "No, no," he exclaimed laughing; "this is a question for a Cambridge man—I am of Oxford, and the mathematics were not in fashion there in my time." "Well then," I resumed, "it is very likely that, if left to yourself, you would doubt, or even deny, the truth of my proposition, at the same time that you have no doubt whatever as to the meaning of it." "Certainly," he said, "I cannot deny that I understand what the proposition means; but how it can be possible for two lines, lengthened indefinitely, to come nearer and nearer at every instant, yet never to meet, I cannot understand at all." "Very well," I proceeded; "but the thing is true nevertheless;

and the mathematical intelligence comprehends the truth itself, and the reasons of it. Just so may it be with the doctrine of the Trinity. The proposition, which states it, I understand perfectly; the truth of the proposition I admit on the authority of Scripture, as you admit the truth of the mathematical proposition on my authority; but the grounds of that truth I cannot understand with my present faculties, any more than you could understand the mathematical demonstration with your present mathematical knowledge. But there are, no doubt, superior intelligences to ours, from which no divine mystery is hidden; and, perhaps, our own understanding hereafter may be expanded to such a compass as to be able to grasp them. However, be that as it may, I am sure you will no longer assert that the Athanasian Creed is unintelligible. It is impossible but that you must understand what is meant, when it is said, that 'the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet that they are not three Gods, but one God.' A plainer proposition than this, so far as the mere terms are concerned, cannot be. The truth of the proposition, and the reasons of that truth, are the only difficulty. But, with respect to the truth, the difficulty vanishes, if we embrace Scripture; and there remain only the reasons on which the truth is founded, and which are, indeed, unintelligible to *us*. And these will always be so, whilst this world lasts; but the Creed is not to blame for this; the Creed has done its duty in putting into our mouths a right confession of our faith, and in warning us of the danger of a perverse interpretation; there it stops; and there our own duty begins."

"Many thanks, good Sir," said Mr. Harrison, "for your excellent lecture on the Athanasian Creed. I wish several persons, whom I know, had been present to hear it. They catch up expressions, and scraps of ideas in the coxcomical world, and take them for solid knowledge and irrefragable argument. But, when such things as these are tried by the touchstone of sober sense and reasoning, they are found immediately to be hollow and empty. Brother Compton, you have mixed too much with people of that description; but I have so good an opinion of your candour, as not to imagine for a moment, that you will not bow to the force of truth, when it comes before you so convincingly, as it does now from the lips of Dr. Warton."

This little speech was better received than might at first have been expected. For Mr. Compton allowed at once that he had been led into some errors by yielding too implicitly to the dicta of men of the world, without examination or reflection. "But, after all," he said, "it perplexes me extremely, when I try to account for the revelation of a doctrine which it is confessed on all hands we cannot understand. Is it possible indeed, (I beg to ask you, Dr. Warton,) is it possible that we can believe at all what we do

not comprehend?" "Your question surprises me," I exclaimed, "after our discussion on the mathematical proposition." "It is very true," he replied, "I believe the proposition without comprehending it." "And you may go a most important step farther," I said, "for men not only believe, but act upon these mathematical propositions, without comprehending the reasons of them. In the most useful arts of life the generality of mankind carry these problems into practice without thinking any further at all about them. And what reason can be assigned for a different conduct in religion? Does not all religion terminate in practice? Why, therefore, may we not take a theological proposition, and apply it to the conduct of our lives, without searching into the depths of it, to fathom them? 'God *is*,' for instance;—there is a very short proposition for you, but one most prolific in practical results. But who pretends to know any thing of the mode of the divine existence? And if we knew it most thoroughly, in what way would that sort of knowledge improve our practice?"

"But then," he replied, "all the propositions relating to the Trinity are mere speculations, and have nothing whatever to do with practice; so that if such a doctrine be indeed revealed, I do not see what design it could have in view, except to confound our understanding, and to impose upon our belief in an arbitrary manner." "The case is not so, my good Sir," I said; "on the contrary, every branch of the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity is most essential to Christian practice; but this cannot be well explained without going into the very arcana of the Christian religion, and I fear we have not time for such an investigation now. To put it shortly, I affirm, that no man can be a perfect Christian, unless he be assured in his mind that the Father is God, and the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; and yet that these three are substantially but one. From such an assurance alone can flow a complete and stable practice. But if any one of these propositions be more connected with practice than another, it is that which asserts the divinity of the Son. Without this, the man who would be a true Christian cannot stir a single step. He cannot suppose, indeed, that any atonement has been made for sin; and therefore he cannot set about the arduous task of becoming a new creature."

Here Mr. Compton shrugged up his shoulders, and exclaimed, "Ah! Sir, the difficulties thicken upon us so fast, that I shall soon be lost in the multitude and the intricacy of them. I cannot presume, Dr. Warton, to occupy so much of your valuable time." This was a civil mode of wishing me good morning, and turning me out of the house. But I was determined that the conference should not end exactly so at all events; and a glance from Mrs. Harrison, who had been elevated with hope, and was now sinking into despair, as I conjectured by her countenance, urged me to at-

tempt at least to make an opening for a future conversation; so I said, "Oh! pray, Sir, do not spare me by any means. My time is only valuable whilst it is thus and similarly employed. Besides, it may be well for yourself, in the present precarious state of your health, to have these religious difficulties cleared away, if it can be done; and I do not know to whom the duty so properly belongs as to *me*."

He was silent, and seemed unable to determine what course to take. Upon which Mrs. Harrison, still more alarmed, interposed, and said, "Dear brother, as Dr. Warton is so kind, we will continue the discussion to-morrow, when I hope you will be a little stronger. I speak for myself too, for I have profited already, and I am sure I shall profit more by what I foresee is to come. It is impossible for any of us to be the worse for it."

This judicious speech settled Mr. Compton's wavering thoughts; so he said hastily, but graciously, "Then we will give you chocolate to-morrow, Dr. Warton, at one o'clock." Upon this I bowed, and departed.

The next day I went according to the appointment. He was on the sofa as before; but I learnt from his sister that he had passed a bad night, and that it was with some difficulty they had got him up, and prepared him for my reception. However, as he was alarmed about himself, I expected to find him so much the more serious, and open to conviction. In fact, it was no light matter that we were about to contend for, but life or death; whether the remnant and the close of his mortal existence should be cheered or not by the bright prospects of the Christian religion.

When we were comfortably seated, and some common things had been said, observing him very much depressed, I endeavoured at once to turn his thoughts towards religion, by remarking, what a vast advantage we had over the very wisest of ancient times, in regard to the means of supporting pain and evil with patience and resignation. In their beautiful works which have come down to us, they talk perpetually of a fate which none can control, and of the folly of complaining where there is no remedy. With no better reasons than these, the Stoic could arm himself with triple steel, impenetrable by any assault; and buffet the waves of adversity, without sinking under them. How much rather, then must the Christian be firmly upheld, who sees, in every thing that befalls him, the hand of a wise and merciful Providence outstretched over him; and which disciplines him for a better and more durable existence hereafter. "Certainly," said Mr. Compton, "this is more comfortable and animating. The other is cold and gloomy enough. What a pity that the Christian account of things cannot be more satisfactorily made out, so as to leave no shadow of doubt in the mind!" "Then," I said, "if the thing were made out to an in-

controvertible certainty, there would be no room for faith at all, which is ordained, however, to be the constant exercise and trial of the Christian. But, with respect to the proof which you call unsatisfactory, wherein does it fail? If it be not actual demonstration, what matter of fact ever had greater evidence?"

"A book which relates extraordinary things cannot be admitted without extraordinary proofs" he said. "No, certainly," I rejoined, "the book records miracles, and miracles perhaps require more, or greater, evidence than other facts; yet it can only be evidence of the same kind as is necessary to establish those other facts. Of course, we must have in all cases of facts the testimony of witnesses. But the criterion to try the credit of witnesses is this.—It is directly as their knowledge of the facts which they relate and the impossibility of their being deceived themselves; and inversely as their interest, or wish to deceive *us*; so that if they are perfectly acquainted with the facts, and can have no probable wish or interest to deceive, their credit is complete. This was the case with the writers of the New Testament; they could not by any means be deceived themselves, or ignorant of the fact of miracles being performed, especially as they themselves performed them every day; and men, who sacrificed their lives, rather than forbear to affirm what they affirmed, could have no conceivable worldly interest at least in view, which might create a wish in them to deceive the rest of mankind. Thus the matter stands simply. Then comes the collateral evidence of the miracles, which seems to have a strength about it incapable of being shaken; I mean the rapid propagation of Christianity in the world, which cannot be accounted for, under all the circumstances, without miracles."

"Yes," he said, "but the evidence against miracles is stronger, than any evidence can possibly be in their favour. God has established certain laws to regulate the course of nature; and that he should change or suspend his own laws is so improbable as to exceed credibility. In short, no evidence can prove such a thing. Let your evidence come as near as you please to demonstration itself, yet I consider it to be a certainty, on the other side, that God never has, and never will, alter those laws. Indeed such a proceeding would disturb all our knowledge of nature, and overturn the conclusions of all our experience." "If miracles were performed daily, or very often," I replied, "the effect might be as you describe; but it would be too much to say, that a certain number of miracles having been performed in certain parts of the world, about 1800 years ago, therefore the knowledge and experience of the whole world, and of all subsequent ages must be overturned by it. The very utmost that could be imagined is this; that persons, seeing a vast number of miracles continually, might begin to doubt what was nature and what was not. But, in truth,

only the very weakest persons could be deceived for a moment. If we were now to see a man cure twenty or a hundred people in one day, of the most dreadful diseases, by merely touching them, would that at all disturb our ideas with respect to the processes of medicine?"

Here I paused; but Mr. Compton not speaking, I continued thus: "Besides, it is to be taken into the account, that the person performing the miracles has an errand to deliver from God; and also, that he performs the miracles expressly to prove his divine commission. Miracles are not to be supposed to be performed at random, and we know not why; but immediately upon seeing a miracle, and our attention together with our astonishment being aroused by it, we shall naturally look to the doer, to hear what he will also say to us; and, if what he says be worthy of God, we shall believe it to come from God, and that the miracle is the work of divine power." "Do you allow, then," he inquired eagerly, "that real miracles may be performed by any other than a divine power?" "That is a question which I cannot settle," I said. "But to argue safely we must allow it. A miracle is something out of the common course of things, and beyond the power of man; and what beings there may be between man and God, capable of performing miracles, it is impossible for us to conjecture. We know, however, from Scripture, of a whole class of beings superior in power to man, and hostile to man, who probably can perform miracles. Scripture itself seems to insinuate that they can; and moreover, that we may be deceived by their miracles, whether false or true. For this reason, therefore, when we see a miracle as we suppose, we must not be carried away by our astonishment, but attend to what the doer says. If the doer should tell us to worship the devil; we detect the miracle immediately, whether a real or a pretended one, to have the devil for its author; but if the doctrine taught be for our improvement and happiness we hail the messenger of God."

Here Mr. Compton interrupted me, before I had finished my explanation, with one of those quibbles, which, as Mr. Harrison well said, in the coxcomical world are reckoned irrefragable arguments. "I have often heard, Sir," he exclaimed rather triumphantly, "that the doctrines of the Gospel are proved by the miracles, and now you tell me that the miracles are proved by the doctrines. Is not this what they call arguing in a circle, which never brings us to any just conclusion? The doctrines depend upon the miracles, and the miracles on the doctrines, what end is there of this? And what supports them both? Or is not this the same as the world and the tortoise? The tortoise supports the world, but what supports the tortoise? Nothing." Thus he turned the argument about into different shapes, as if he never would be tired of it:

and, no doubt, if he had been surrounded by his gay infidel companions, (but the house of sickness was not the place for *them*,) I should have been laughed to scorn. I cast a glance upon Mr. and Mrs. Harrison ; they had put down their chocolate, and were sitting upon thorns ; they probably disliked their brother's tone, but I fancied, besides, that they were not masters of the question, and thence their uneasiness.

To re-assure them in an instant, I began my reply with saying, "Too many persons, I fear, have been deceived by that fallacy. It seems a perplexing difficulty, but it is soon unravelled. Divide doctrines into their two species, and the thing is done. Let me ask you, Mr. Compton, does not the Gospel contain moral rules, agreeable to our reason, and discoverable by it, as well as theological points, some of which are beyond our reason, and all of them purely matters of revelation?" He hesitated ; so I said, "Take an example ; 'Do unto others as you would wish that they should do unto *you*.' Is not this maxim to be found in the Gospel?" He assented. "Did we stand in need of a revelation to make this known to us?" "No," he replied. "Is it not agreeable to our reason?" He allowed it. "Is it not also discoverable by our reason, and the light of nature?" "To be sure it is," he answered ; "and it had been discovered long before the Gospel mentioned it." "Very well then," I said, "we will call, if you please, all doctrines of this kind moral precepts ; or, for the sake of brevity, precepts simply." "As you will," he replied. "Now," I said, "take an example of another sort of doctrine. 'I and my Father are one.' This is in the Gospel, is it not?" He granted it. "Could we have known it without revelation?" "No, certainly," he answered. "Is it agreeable to our reason, or beyond it?" "Beyond it," he replied, "most unquestionably." "Now, then," I said, "for all the doctrines of this kind, which are very numerous, let us reserve the term doctrines, and appropriate it to *them* alone. Have you any objection?" "None whatever," he answered. "So then," I said, "we have now agreed to denominate all the great propositions of Scripture by the two titles of precepts and doctrines, and the difference between them is manifest." "It is quite so," he replied. "Observe then," I said. "When it is asserted, that the doctrines are proved by the miracles, they mean by doctrines what we have this instant agreed to call doctrines ; namely, the pure theological dogmata, which are beyond our reason, and discoverable only by revelation ; and it is perfectly plain, that, unless the teacher of these doctrines performed miracles, they could not be known to be of divine origin. On the other hand, when it is asserted that the miracles are proved by the doctrines, by doctrines is meant precepts ; namely, those excellent moral rules for the government of human life which our reason is

capable of discovering, which human reason had partly discovered, and which the most exalted reason the most approves. Why these precepts are necessary to prove the miracles to be divine, arises from the supposition that miracles, true or false, but such as to deceive, may be performed by wicked beings. For, if any thing contradictory to these precepts be taught by the doer of the miracles, the miracles are detected at once. As our Saviour said, 'the tree is known by its fruits;' and again, 'if Satan be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?' Tell me then what the precepts are, and I will tell you what the doer of the miracle is. Upon the whole, therefore, you see, there is no vicious circle, as you imagined. This, in fact, is the order in which the transaction may be supposed to proceed. An extraordinary person appears in the world, in the most learned and enlightened age of it; uneducated himself, he preaches a system of ethics, so pure, so sublime, so calculated to promote the welfare and happiness of individuals, of families, and of nations, that all the accumulated reason of all mankind in all ages had not attained to any thing equal; the same person performs mighty miracles. What must we think of him?" "Why, Sir," exclaimed Mr. Harrison with warmth, "that God is with him of a truth." "Undoubtedly," I said: "for such a system overturns the devil's kingdom, and therefore the devil could not work the miracles to establish that system. But mark the sequel. This extraordinary personage, having excited your admiration, and won your love, by the beauty and perfection of his heavenly precepts; and, by his works, having extorted from you the willing confession that his authority is divine, you are now ripe for his doctrines; you are now prepared to admit what you could only admit on divine authority: such a teacher cannot lie; whatever he says is truth itself, and issues from the fountain of truth: though your reason, so delighted and satisfied before, may now be perplexed and dazzled, and unable to cope with the mighty difficulties of the things revealed; yet you must submit your reluctant faculties, you must bow in humble silence, or you must break out into prayer, and say, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

I stopped here for want of breath, and from intensity of feeling; being wrought up to a high solemn tone, beyond the standard of common talk, and big with the momentous import of the discussion. None of them interrupted the silence. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison had their eyes fixed on Mr. Compton, and seemed to expect that he should declare his sentiments; but he uttered not a word. He appeared to be wrapt in thoughts which were not easy to him. It might be, that he was disturbed by the breaking up of his position, and by the consequent approximation towards the necessity

of becoming a Christian. But he was not a penitent, nor weaned enough as yet from the vices of the world ; so that to adopt Christianity was an intolerable idea. He feared it, and, therefore, he did not yet desire it.

At length, having had time to reflect, I thought it better to attempt to fill up the parts of the argument, than to press him for an opinion upon it in his present state ; I resumed my discourse, therefore, nearly as follows : “ We have passed on so rapidly, that we have left several important things behind us. The excellency of the things taught decides the character of the miracles, as we have already shown ; but then there is a re-action of the miracles upon the things taught, and we now perceive them to be directly sanctioned by the great God of heaven, and we acknowledge, of course, that they must be implicitly obeyed. Under any circumstances, the Gospel-precepts would be pronounced to be worthy of God ; but, taking them in the abstract, we could not know whether they came immediately from him. Being things discoverable by human reason, we could not tell whether they might not have been so discovered, whatever might be their superior excellence, and the humbleness of their authors ; and, therefore, we could not assign to them more than the highest human authority ; but, the preachers of them performing miracles, at once the authority becomes divine. For a test of the miracles, excellence was enough ; but for our government it was expedient to add divine authority ; and this was done by the miracles.

“ Then again, with respect to the doctrines, at least a great portion of them, there is a re-action there also. Take this as an example of what I mean :—‘ God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all, who believe in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ This is one of the doctrines which we could never have known but by revelation, and even when revealed to us, we understand very little more than the simple proposition. But this is by no means a dry, speculative, unoperative proposition ; and what is most striking about it, is the benevolence of it, which surpasses all human understanding. We can only receive it indeed, and believe it altogether, on the authority of the miracles ; but the clear, benevolent object of it may be taken as a primary test of the miracles themselves. What a picture have we here of God’s immense goodness and mercy towards a fallen part of his creation, that he spared his own Son from his bosom to redeem and save it ! How gracious, unspeakably gracious, to make faith and trust in that Saviour the condition of rescuing us from eternal death, and restoring us to that everlasting life, which we had forfeited and lost. We are absorbed in wonder and gratitude, and are disposed to exclaim at once, this is divine ; this proves the miracles to be of God.

"Now, then, put the whole together. A man in outward appearance preaches most excellent precepts and most benevolent doctrines; and he performs miracles, which, in consequence, we pronounce divine. But, the preacher's divine commission being now established, we revert to the same precepts and doctrines, and pronounce *them* divine also. This is the short summation of the argument; pray tell me, Mr. Compton, whether, in your judgment of it, there lies any objection to it. Is the reasoning liable to the charge of being in a circle, or paralogistic? I throw myself upon your candour and ingenuousness for a real, unsophisticated opinion." "Why, then, Dr. Warton," he said "as you press me so closely, I must confess, that you have put this matter in a light which is new to me, and, perhaps, the true one, if miracles were really performed. But all this is outstripping the main question. You assume those miracles throughout; whereas I denied in the very beginning that any evidence could prove a miracle. Without doubt, if miracles had been really performed, then they might have been applied to the purposes which you mention, of showing that certain precepts had God's authority, and that certain doctrines were true doctrines, and to be believed as such." "It is true," I said, "we have not attacked that question directly owing to your own impetuosity; but we have acted as pioneers, and have cleared away the approaches to it. A miracle, which is a departure from the established course of God's government, can only be justified, even according to my notions, by a most worthy and an extraordinary occasion such as an errand from God to mankind would be. I ask you, could any errand be known to be from God without a miracle accompanying it?" "Yes," he answered, "the errand itself might show it." "Then," I said, "if any errand could show it, the Christian religion, *à fortiori*, would show it; for never was so noble and excellent an errand as that. But we have settled already, that the Christian precepts, excellent and noble as they may be, could not show it, because it is of their essence to be discoverable by human reason; and certainly the doctrines could not show it: because, although excellent and noble too, like the precepts, and well worthy of coming from God, and being such as can only come by revelation, yet still, the result of experience decides the matter incontestably, that it is difficult to persuade multitudes of mankind to receive them as divine, even with the help of miracles; so much are many of them above and beyond our reason. In fact, I believe it is to get rid of these doctrines, that persons would get rid of the miracles; which is a tacit confession that only miracles could prove them. Therefore *revolveris eodem*; how is the message to be shown to be from God? When God wished to send a message to the Jews by Moses, that illustrious messenger very properly demanded a miraculous power for his credential; for he argued well,

that without such a credential, the Jews would only disregard, or ridicule his pretensions, however gracious and honourable for them the message itself might be. Again, when God sent a message to Gideon, to order him to do something, for which he thought himself unqualified by his want of rank and ability, he would not be satisfied, that the message really came from God, until he saw a miracle. And this agrees with the common sense of mankind. I ask you, therefore, once more, to point out, if you can, any other method of discriminating God's ambassador than by a miracle."

Mr. Compton appearing to be reluctant to commit himself, Mr. Harrison answered for him, that there was no other way imaginable; and that it was all in vain to talk, or think of any expedient, with a view of getting rid of miracles. "The case," he said, "is too manifest to admit of debate, or doubt." This piqued Mr. Compton, and urged him to advance what was extremely absurd for a man of his principles; namely, that the messenger might be described beforehand, and consequently, known when he came, by his correspondence to the description. "This previous description would be a prophecy, would it not?" I asked. "It certainly would," he replied. "Then you allow," I asked again, "do you, Sir, such things as prophecies?" "No, indeed," he exclaimed, aware of the net in which he had incautiously entangled himself, "I allow nothing. I must have every thing proved legitimately. I have only stated a supposition now for the sake of discussing it." This discouraged me; but I proceeded to inquire, whether he considered a prophecy to be according to the course of nature, or within the sphere of human ability. "No," he answered, "I do not. For though some men have a wonderful talent of foreseeing events at a distance, yet it can never be reckoned, generally, a human talent." "Then a prophecy," I said, "is a species of miracle, is it not?" "Why, to be sure," he replied, "you may call it so, if you please." "Oh!" I rejoined, "it matters not what I, or you, Mr. Compton, may be pleased to call it. A prophecy is a real miracle, in the true sense of the term; it is out of the course of nature, and the power of man. And more especially to prefigure a person, who is to appear at a remote period, so exactly, as that he may be known at once when he does appear, seems to be one of the greatest of miracles. We, therefore, still want a criterion.

By this time, Mr. Compton had bethought himself, that there was no other resource for him, but to deny that God ever sent such errands to this world; so he turned round upon me on the sudden, and said, "You have allowed, Dr. Warton, that errands and miracles go both together; and that either of them without the other is not credible, or not supposable. Take away the errand, therefore, and the miracle falls to the ground of itself, being left without any support. And I am sure, it appears to *me* one of the

most unlikely things in the world, that God should trouble himself, or condescend so far, as to send any messages to us. We are not of consequence enough in the creation. This earth is but a mole-hill, and *we* ants upon it, in comparison with the infinite extent of God's whole dominion."

Thus, then, after a long conflict, a new battle was to be fought, which might last equally long, and terminate with equal, apparent success. But it behoved me not to flinch; so, after a short pause, having girded myself with fresh armour, I put it to the proof:—"Your account of man, at all events," I said, "is very different from the scriptural account. Judge, when you have heard the latter, which is the noblest, and the most accurate, and the most desirable to embrace. When the great Creator had finished the rest of his works, wanting another creature to rule them all, and, as their Priest, to adore him in their name, he said, 'Let us make man in our own image after our likeness.' In the creation of other things, all is done with the tone of command, or with a mere volition. 'Let there be light; let there be a firmament; let the earth bring forth so and so.' But when man is to be made—a creature who is to be endued with reason and intelligence—the very image of the Maker,—he uses an expression which indicates deliberation and counsel; he consults with some other august beings, (the two remaining persons of the Trinity, no doubt,) of whom, as well as of himself, man was to be both the workmanship and the resemblance. By the mode, too, in which the body is related to have been formed, there is a striking mark of the pre-eminence of man. To mould the human body the divine workman, it should seem, takes the clay himself. He applies, we are told, his own hands to the senseless matter; and there grows up under them a form of exquisite, surpassing beauty; a wonderful specimen of what omniscience can plan, and omnipotence execute. But the production of the soul is still more astonishing; he derives it not from the most subtile material substances—he breathes it from on high; the soul is a particle of his own spiritual essence—a spark of his own ethereal flame, unextinguishable for ever. It is the soul, therefore, which reflects chiefly the bright image of the Maker—immaterial, immortal—possessing within herself the faculty of self-agency; gifted with the noble powers of thinking, of reasoning, of willing; the subject of moral responsibility—capable of righteousness and holiness in this transient world, and of aspiring beyond it to a state of everlasting permanency and perfection in her native heavens. All the matter in all the millions of suns and tens of millions of worlds which revolve about them—whatever beauty, whatever magnificence God has conferred upon it, is not equal to one single particle of mind. Such is the soul,—and thus were soul and body created; and all the subsequent accounts of Scripture show, that God has never withdrawn

his care from any of the works of his own hands; that he superintends them by a vigilant, incessant providence; that every soul of man more especially is infinitely precious in his sight; and that his will is, that not one of them should perish. Hence, therefore, message after message to mankind—messages of love, of instruction, of warnings, of threatenings, of promises, of pardon, of reconciliation, of grace here, of glory hereafter. Thus speaks the Bible; and does not every heart beat responsive to this gladsome history? Where is the man who, so far from being refreshed and renovated, in his pilgrimage through life, by drinking deeply of the streams of this divine knowledge, would rather plunge blindfold into the dark, disconsolate system of conflicting atoms—of a God, too inert and indolent, too fond of ease and repose, too much wrapt up in the silent, abstracted contemplation of himself and his own essence and pleasures, to create worlds, or to govern them? How different the God of the Bible, by whom every hair of our heads is numbered, and without whose knowledge and will not a sparrow falleth to the ground? But, it must disturb him, forsooth—this omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent Being—it must disturb him, and distract him, and overwhelm him, to bear so vast a load—to regulate so prodigious a multiplicity of things. Have you considered how much those infinite perfections infer? They confute the narrow notion of a God faint and weary with the burden of affairs. You are finite, and your works are in the proportion of finite to finite; but in the works of God the proportion is of infinite to infinite. Yes, you may still say, but it is all below his dignity. Not so thought the sublimest genius amongst men, who sung of God after another sort. ‘He giveth food to the young ravens which cry; he openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.’ There is an argument, however, which is short, and irresistible. If it was not below his dignity to create, it is not below it to preserve and govern his creation.”

Thus I ran on, and could have run on for ever, borne along and snatched away by the prolific magnificence of the topic; but still more, by a feeling of indignation, that men, who are taught, and encouraged, and inwardly urged to look so high—*erectos ad sidera tollere vultus*—should voluntarily debase themselves and their condition so low, as if they would be prone and grovelling, like the brute. After I had paused, my mind still swelled with the idea; and a minute or two elapsed, before I was aware that nobody was preparing to answer me. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison told me in private, afterwards, that they were silent, lest they might weaken what I had said. Mr. Compton I could not fathom. He was capable, indeed, of admiring lofty notions, because of his liberal education; and I fancied, once or twice, that I saw a beam of light irradiating his care-worn countenance, and I almost expected him

to exclaim, *dedo manus*; but sin yet weighed him down; and, as he might fear, that, if the Gospel were true, its punishments and not its rewards awaited him, he, perhaps, in his secret thoughts, preferred annihilation.

However, at length, to bring him to something more decisive, I said, "Your objection as to the trouble and condescension of the Deity in favour of man, and your ideas of the insignificance of man himself, are, I trust, materially weakened, if not entirely removed. It is true my answer has been derived chiefly from Scripture, but at all events it must be allowed, with respect to man, that on this globe there is no other creature in any way to be compared with him, or so worthy of the care of Providence. It must be allowed, moreover, that this globe itself is an important constituent portion of one great solar system, which embraces many millions of miles in the regions of space; and that, if there were thousands or millions of such systems, or much larger ones, yet it is quite incredible that any one of them should be neglected by its Supreme Maker; when in the construction, and movements, and all the circumstances of them there is displayed, without doubt, as in ours, an astonishing skill of mechanics and geometry; striking marks, innumerable, of contrivance and design, and of final causes; and a beauty, magnificence, order, and harmony of the parts, and of the whole, which bespeak the divine workman. If one such system were blotted at once out of the Universe, we might fancy that it would not be missed, and that no gap would be visible in the creation. But if one might be blotted out in this manner, and God not regard the loss, as being insignificant when compared with the remainder, then another and another may be blotted out with the same result; and I do not see where this will end, but in proving too much: namely, that God cares for none of these many systems, and not merely that he does not care for one or two out of the many. But, I presume, you will not go this length; and therefore we must of necessity conclude that our own solar system is under his immediate superintending providence, and, consequently, every world also which is a part of that system—and, above all, what is most valuable in each world. And here, as we have said, in this planet of ours, man is the most valuable creature, for whose habitation and use, in fact, the planet itself was apparently made. Or do you think that God has placed more valuable creatures than men in the other planets, towards whom he exercises a due and constant regard; and that this earth, although inhabited and possessed by so excellent a creature as man must be confessed to be, is still but a sort of moon to those other planets, or a mere counterpoise, to regulate their velocities, and to keep them in their appointed stations, and at their proper distances from the sun, and from each other?"

The absurdity of this supposition drew forth from my antagonist the only observation which he had hazarded for a long time. Amongst his own set, where there was no restraint, no necessity for deliberation, no fear of being convicted of ignorance, he was quick, I believe, in repartee, and by a smart sally of wit he could turn the laugh upon an opponent ; but such a talent was useless here. He had tried it indeed, and it had failed. The respect which even the profligate feel for the sacredness of the clergyman's character ; the charitable and wholly disinterested purpose for which I came to him ; the gravity and solemnity of my manner at particular moments ; the superior information which I possessed upon the subjects of our discussion ; the tying him down to every sentiment and expression which he uttered, and the giving him an answer to every thing, all these together produced a sort of awe and fear in him, lest he should either offend *me* or expose himself. He was therefore becoming very cautious, and in consequence he was often entirely mute. Here, however, he interposed, and allowed, that it would be a sad clumsy contrivance to make one world for the sake of lighting and balancing other worlds. To do so would be somewhat similar to what they tell us of the spleen in the human body, that it was only put there to pack up the space tight and clever. " But, after all," he said, " I do not see why we may not consider the divine architect just the same as any human architect. The watch-maker, for instance, constructs a watch with wonderful skill and pains, and delivers it out of his hands when finished, and troubles himself no more about. What is a world to God but as a watch to a watch-maker ?"

" What object," I inquired, " has the watchmaker in view when he makes a watch?" " To maintain himself, I have no doubt," was his answer. " Most likely," I said, " and therefore of course he does not care what becomes of it, when he has exchanged it for the things which he wants ; for clothing, food, and lodging. Has God any wants of this kind, or of any other kind?" " None whatever," he replied ; " it would be absurd to think so." " It would indeed," I said. " But still he must have some object in making worlds, must he not? Does he make them, do you suppose, as children blow soap-bubbles, to try their own dexterity ; to gaze at them mounting into the air ; to admire, for an instant, the pretty colours which they reflect, and then to laugh and exult when they burst and disappear?" " I allow," he answered, " that he must have some object, and a worthier object than this ; but what it may be I cannot conjecture." " I will tell you then," I said. " It is his desire of exercising his great attributes for the purpose of communicating pleasure and happiness. If he were the only being, as he is the greatest, he would still be infinitely happy in himself. But this solitary grandeur and self-sufficiency limit, or

even supersede, the very energies which may well be supposed to constitute his happiness. Simply to be—wonderful as is the mode of his existence; necessary, that is, and underived, from all eternity—simply to be, even after this unspeakable mode, can never be all. Infinite goodness *must* and *will* diffuse itself around through infinite space; infinite wisdom will never cease to plan, nor infinite power to create, recipients of infinite love. Thus worlds arise, by the eternal fiat, replenished with creatures capable of their suitable enjoyments, and some amongst the rest capable also of a moral government; and it is evident that in the government of these chiefly will the great glory of so incomparable a being be, first and last, most illustriously displayed. Every flower that sips the dew of heaven seems to lift up its head to heaven in token of gratitude and praise; every living creature that creeps upon the earth, or wings the air, or swims through the world of waters, by their sportive joy attest the sense of their Creator's bounty; but this is mere poetry, you will say; it is the rational creature only who is able to give an actual utterance to the sentiments of the whole creation; he alone, in this vast temple of the universe, can actually worship the God of it; he alone, indeed, has faculties, by which he may ascend to the knowledge of him, appreciate his manifold works of mercy, and above all, by obedience to his will, of his own free choice, and by no compulsory law of his nature, glorify him with his proper glory. But now, observe, we are returned to the point from which we set out. The whole of the divine will we can only ascertain by a revelation, and as God's chief glory arises from our conformity to that will, a revelation is *à priori* a most probable event, and consequently miracles are probable also, by which alone the revelation can be proved. But this may be put in a stronger light. Suppose the rational creature, by the abuse of his noble but dangerous privilege of free-will, to have transgressed the boundaries originally assigned to him, and thus to have fallen under the just displeasure of his Maker—how is he to recover his lost estate? How is he to know, indeed, whether it be recoverable or not? O what a worthy cause have we here for a revelation of love and mercy, and therefore for miracles to attest its truth, to raise the drooping spirit of the wretched fallen being, and to assure him of his reconciliation to his God!"

Here I stopped, for I was greatly fatigued with speaking so much, and other engagements pressed for my departure. So to cut short at once all further discussion, I rose from my seat and said, "I shall be happy, Mr. Compton, to see you again. A great deal has passed between us, in this hasty discussion, which deserves, and may require, maturer reflection. Think it over, I earnestly entreat you, in the calm solitude of your own breast. Trace out the several steps of the argument through which we have travelled,

and examine the ground on which we have trodden. If you discover a false step, or what may appear to *you* to be so, point it out to me when we next meet, and we will re-examine it together. There is a great stake upon this die." Then, having said this, before they were well aware, and with a view to escape the trouble and delay of ceremony, I snatched up my hat and cane, and was out of the room in a moment. I was really in a hurry; but I feel sometimes after conversations of this kind, as when I descend from the pulpit, that the small talk of common life is a sad falling off, and an intolerable frivolity.

My going away, however, so hastily, procured me a visit the next day from Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, who complimented me upon my eloquence, as they were pleased to call it, and upon the irresistible force of argument with which I had beaten Mr. Compton out of all his positions; and they told me that they did not know how to thank me sufficiently for the great exertions which I had made to convince him, and for the cool temper and unwearied patience with which I had followed up the shifting current of the discussion, and had met him perpetually on his own new-chosen ground. But, what was of more consequence, they informed me that they were commissioned by Mr. Compton himself to apologize to me for any apparent want of civility in his conduct towards me, and to charge it upon the deplorable state of his health, which often tormented his body with pain, and disturbed his mind with care. To this they added, that, if the following day was fine, he intended to try a longer airing than usual, and invited me to accompany him, with the express view of renewing the conversation. "But what hope?" I inquired eagerly. "This invitation seems a favourable omen; it bespeaks a willingness to hear, at least, which God perchance may bless. Has any progress meanwhile been made?" "Believe me, Sir," said Mrs. Harrison, "this itself is no little progress; but much more, I trust, has been done. I was left alone with my brother when you went from us yesterday, Mr. Harrison having followed you, though without overtaking you, to the door. After a moment's pause, 'This Dr. Warton,' he exclaimed suddenly, 'is an expert man at his weapons, and pins me down so tightly that I cannot get loose. I shall be frightened when he begins those plausible questions again, which I no sooner answered than I found myself caught, and condemned out of my own mouth. But he was equally terrible to me when he spread his sails and took a wider range; for though I had only to listen, and might have listened with delight if I had been an unconcerned auditor, yet feeling myself to be a principal character in the drama, and one very deeply interested, and represented, too, throughout in a degraded light, and borne down by a furious torrent, these wretched cushions, I assure you, were never so uneasy to me be-

fore. He had greatly the advantage over me, my dear Charlotte, had he not?" "Yes, indeed, brother," I answered, "he had certainly; but it was no discredit to your talents, for in my opinion the cause which you endeavoured to maintain cannot be maintained by any talents. It is too unworthy both of God and of man." "But the Athanasian Creed," he said, "who would have surmised that I should have made so sorry a figure there? I never heard a single soul speak in defence of it before; I thought it the very quintessence of illiberality and absurdity, but I could not gainsay this same Dr. Warton. Well, Charlotte leave me till dinner-time to myself. I will for once at least attend to his advice, and retrace the course of the argument, that I may see whether I granted any thing which I ought to have denied, and the concession of which paved the way for his apparent victory." "Do, my dear brother," I replied, "and be sure to take care that you are impartial, and search for truth—for truth alone, and not for the triumph of any set opinions." The remainder of my story is short. He summoned me to his bed-chamber this morning, and, after saying that he had been thinking deeply and incessantly upon all the topics that arose in the discussion between himself and you, he dictated the message which I have just delivered." "Very well," I said, "I shall be at his service, and may God prosper the event." In this prayer they joined fervently, and so quitted the rectory.

The next morning was propitious to the plan of the extended drive, though not warm enough to admit of the carriage being thrown open. If this, indeed, had been done, we might have enjoyed the prospects better, but I do not see exactly how we could have conversed with due freedom, (especially as, when heated, I spoke sometimes in an elevated key,) without making the coachman and footman a party in the discussion. Mrs. Harrison alone was with us; for, Mr. Compton being so placed as to occupy one side of the carriage himself, there was room for two only on the other side, and it was his particular wish to have his sister with him. He considered his health upon the whole a little improved, and with that idea his spirits had risen in proportion; but I understood it to be the opinion of the medical men that his recovery was not to be expected; that he might linger for two or three months, or that his death might be soon and sudden. He had not the most distant notion himself that there was a limit fixed for him, so very short at the longest; when his disorder was violent he was immediately depressed and thought he should die, but a better night and a little freedom from pain, removed the troublesome impression, and revived the hopes of life.

Upon being clear of the houses and the pavement, when the usual things about his health, the weather, and the intended ride had been said, Mr. Compton remarked, that "the conclusion, at

which we appeared in our late discussion to have arrived, depended upon a premise rather assumed than established. Miracles presupposed an errand from God to man; but the object of a divine errand must be to declare the divine will. Now, if the divine will be discoverable by man himself by a due use of his own reason, there will be no necessity of a special errand." "No," I said; "but you must recollect, that precepts only, and not doctrines, are within the scope of human discovery. Granting, therefore, that all the most excellent precepts, as we have them in the Gospel, were actually discovered, and sufficiently made known to mankind, and universally acknowledged for the rule of life—all which is necessary besides the discovery—yet how are we to know the doctrines, which are not so discoverable, and which moreover it may be highly expedient or even necessary for us to know? In fact, these doctrines, we may well imagine, are the very occasion of God's errand. Do you think God would send a message to us, and disturb the course of nature to bear witness to it, merely to tell us what we know, or might have known already?"

Here I paused for an answer; but Mr. Compton declined to give any, and said, "I am much obliged to you, Dr. Warton, for talking with me; but I must request of you not to pursue that system of questions upon questions. My health is not equal to the fatigue and anxiety of it; and I find myself sometimes entrapped by it unawares into concessions, of which I afterwards repent. I like best to hear you speak continuously, and to be enabled to view the whole argument at once." "We will see about it," I replied, "but at all events I must first trouble you so far as to ask you, whether truth be not the great object of our investigation, and such truth as is of unspeakable moment?" "It is certainly," he answered. "And does not every argument," I asked again, "consist of three propositions at the least, when fully drawn out; namely, the two premises and the conclusion?" He allowed it. "If then," I said, "I put the first premise to you in the form of a question, and you consent to it with your own mouth, and the second premise also be put and granted in a similar manner,—can you have a more compendious or a more decisive and indisputable mode of arriving at self-conviction with respect to the conclusion, which is, perhaps, the very truth after which we are searching, and which we agree in considering of extreme importance?" "It may be the shortest mode," he replied, "and when a man has allowed the premises, he cannot easily, or with a good face, dispute the legitimate conclusion; but it would be more agreeable to me to know the whole journey which it is proposed to me to travel, before I take a single step. In short, I would not willingly take a single step, without knowing where it would place me, and what would be the second and the third step, and, above all, the last.

As I said before, any other mode is too fatiguing and too anxious for me." "Which is easiest," I inquired, "to consider one insulated, unconnected proposition, or a chain of propositions consisting of many links?" He hesitated; but he was compelled to confess, that the single proposition was the easiest to consider. "Again," I inquired, "as to the man who is in search of truth, is he alarmed about any of the steps which may conduct him towards it, being so excellent a thing, and the very thing which he wants to find?" He was touched to the quick, and instead of answering, he exclaimed, "Oh, Dr. Warton, you are doing at this moment what I particularly deprecated." "Yes, yes," I said smiling; "these preliminaries must needs be settled in this very manner, and then we may afterwards consider, whether the same, or any other mode shall be adopted, in the great debate which is to follow. Suppose, therefore, for a moment, a person having a monstrous, unaccountable antipathy to that mathematical truth of which I spoke, respecting the two lines, that continually approached and never met; what would be his conduct? When any simpler proposition, in the road to the more difficult one, which he holds in abhorrence, was proposed to him, would he not fatigue and rack his brain with thinking how that simpler proposition might bear upon the other, and torment himself with anxiety, lest, by allowing it, he might imperceptibly be committed to the allowing of the abominable one? Whereas, if he were simply a learner of mathematical truths, without any prejudice against any particular proposition, he would follow not only fearlessly, but also joyfully, wherever he might be led, from truth to truth, and refreshed and recruited by every new discovery. Is not this so?" It was impossible for him to deny it. "Much more, then," I said, "will it be so in morals and religion, which affect every man's present conduct and future prospects. If the inquirer is prejudiced against the conclusion, and thinks he has any interest in evading it, he will, of course, fatigue himself with anxiety about every proposition which may bring him a step nearer to it; but if not, he will never consider previously where any proposition, if accepted, may eventually lead him; nor will he be anxious about it: all that sort of fatigue and anxiety he will entirely escape; he will consider only whether the proposition be true, and he will act accordingly."

Here I paused. Mr. Compton was conscience-stricken and speechless. He was too proud to confess or to deny his feelings; but if he had denied them, his countenance would have convicted him of a falsehood; to bring him to confess them seemed to me to be of the most essential consequence. So, turning to Mrs. Harrison, I said, "Join with me, my good Madam, in pressing Mr. Compton to lay open his whole bosom to us. We are precisely the persons to whom it would be most natural, most proper, and

most safe to do it. You are his sister, whom, after a long estrangement, he has recalled to his affection; and he is assured of your tender care and solicitude for him. He cannot fear to entrust any thing to *you*. I am his spiritual guardian, appointed by the laws of his country and the discipline of our holy church, to entreat, to advise, to admonish him, for his present and eternal welfare. But I cannot perform this office with due effect, with so many impediments in my way, which, perhaps, I might remove at once, if I knew his heart."

Mrs. Harrison was deeply affected; and could only weep. But her tears, perhaps, availed her more than any words could have done. Her brother was evidently moved, and took her by the hand, and tried to sooth her; but still no advance was yet made towards the purpose which I had in view. I resumed, therefore, and said, looking at Mr. Compton, "If the Christian religion be true, we *must* believe it at all events; and should there be any thing unrepented of in our past life, which makes us dread it, and cavil against it, *that* will not alter the fact or the consequence of its truth; nor would it profit us to die unconvinced; the fact and the consequence will remain the same. If, on the other hand, the Christian religion be false, which, however, in the face of so much evidence can only be supposed for the sake of argument; yet what shall we have lost by embracing and obeying it? We shall have lived according to the best law of our nature, and we shall die with the most agreeable hopes; nor will the disappointment of those hopes occasion us a moment's pain—for we shall wake no more to be conscious of it."

Upon this Mr. Compton, with great emotion, said to Mrs. Harrison, "Does Dr. Warton know, my dear sister, what sort of a life I have led?" "No doubt of it," she answered. "Being constantly resident in his parish, and mixing, as he does, with all ranks, he knows every thing of every body. You have nothing to conceal from him; why should you hesitate, therefore, to talk freely to him?" "If you are thoroughly acquainted with my circumstances, Dr. Warton," he said, turning towards me, but not venturing to meet my countenance front to front, "you will understand pretty well upon what principle I am acting. A person who has lived as I have, has no comfort but in the supposed falsehood of Christianity." "Pardon me, Mr. Compton," I replied, "there is no comfort for you but in the supposition of its truth." "How so, Sir," he inquired hastily, and lifted his eyes from the floor, and encountered mine; and then reiterated his question, "how so, I beseech you?" "You confess yourself a sinner," I answered. "The Gospel, if true, is the religion of sinners; and it is its peculiar business, and professed object, to save all sinners who believe, embrace, and trust in it. This is precisely what you want; and it

should, therefore, be the ground of unutterable comfort to you to suppose Christianity true. But, if the Gospel be false, yet, as you cannot certainly know it to be so, there is no comfort for sinners, from the mere supposition of its falsehood; unless it be a comfort to them to think that perchance they may die, like the beasts which perish; and so be annihilated for ever." "Well," he said, interrupting me before I had finished, "and is not *that* better than to think of being tormented for ever?" "Undoubtedly it is," I replied; "but still the rational soul, if there be any spark of nobleness about it, abhors annihilation, and would almost prefer to abide the risk of eternal punishment, in order to avoid the dreadful thought of being no more to all eternity. Is annihilation indeed your own choice; and is your love and desire of it the baneful cause of this *bellum usque ad internecionem*, this πολέμος ἄσπονδος, which you wage against Christianity?"

Mr. Compton fetched a deep sigh, and answered, "I am, perhaps, as capable as another of aspiring to immortality; and the idea of annihilation, in the abstract, spreads a gloomy horror over my imagination, the same as it does to all men of an ingenuous spirit. But I prefer it as the least evil of two. A blissful immortality I suppose myself incapable of obtaining; and, therefore, upon the supposition of Christianity being true, my lot can only be an immortality of wo. Is it any wonder, then, that I should fear to be convinced of the truth of a scheme, which threatens me with so many horrors? No, no; I do not court or love annihilation; I shudder at the thoughts of——" Here for a moment his utterance was suspended; but soon, by a sort of convulsive energy, he finished the sentence, and ejaculated the tremendous monosyllable, "Hell."

Mrs. Harrison turned pale, and seemed ready to faint; and, therefore, to relieve her, I took up the conversation without a moment's delay. "Compose yourself, my good Sir," I said, "and let us try quietly to put this matter upon its right footing. We are straying, I think, from the exact question, and bringing things into debate which have nothing to do with it. Allow me to ask you this; will your wishing about any thing in any particular way, or fearing about it in any particular way, or being convinced by probable arguments in any particular way, make the thing to be according to your wishes, your fears, or your conviction?" He granted that it would not. "Does it not often happen," I asked again, "that men wish, and fear, and are convinced, exactly in opposite ways, about the same thing?" "Certainly," he said. "Then," I rejoined, "it is clear that both cannot possibly be in the right." He allowed it. "There is also," I said, "another thing to be taken into the account; that not only may a thing be true, which you have convinced yourself by probable arguments to be false; but

also the fact, that other people are convinced by argument the contrary way, must tend to weaken your own conviction, and to create doubts in your mind as to the validity of it; from whence I would infer, that it is next to impossible for you to arrive at a firm, unshaken conviction with respect to the falsehood of Christianity. You may think that the evidence against it preponderates over the evidence for it; but, as your own judgment has no exclusive privilege of being in the right, and as the greatest of men in all ages, the Bacons, the Boyles, the Lockes, the Addisons, the Newtons, have come to the contrary conclusion, you *must* think also, that the chances in favour of its truth are strong against you; and, consequently, you will never be able to bring yourself to so full a persuasion of what you wish as to enjoy perfect peace and tranquillity in your own breast. This I consider to be your case; and on this idea I said, that there is no comfort for you but in the supposition of the truth of Christianity."

This way of putting the question seemed to be new to him, and he was not prepared to answer at once; so I resumed the argument in this manner. "You wish to arrive at the conviction that Christianity is false. If you could do so, it might not accomplish your purpose nevertheless, which is to escape eternal punishment; because, in spite of your conviction, Christianity may be true, and you may wake again in another world to prove it." He trembled like an aspen-leaf; but I continued thus:—"I assert, however, in the next place, that you will never arrive at that conviction. There is something in your own breast that will never suffer it. God himself, I believe, will never suffer it. A doubt at least about it will always torment you, when you recollect the possibility of your being mistaken; the multitudes of great and good men, who have examined the subject and have been satisfied with it, living and dying in the faith of Christ; and the prodigious weight of the evidence itself, which it is extremely difficult for any man to gainsay, or resist. May I ask, Mr. Compton, whether you are not, since these recent conversations with *me*, at a greater distance than ever from the conviction which you wish to entertain?"

"I am indeed," he confessed in a moment, and without the slightest hesitation. "My suspicions of the truth of Christianity increase daily." "Then why kick against the pricks?" I said. "Let me conjure you to endeavour to convert those suspicions, and all your fears, into hopes. You are labouring under an erroneous alarm when you assume that there is no hope for you if Christianity be true. You have formed altogether a wrong idea of the Gospel if you think yourself, on account of your sins, without the pale of salvation, and reserved irreversibly for an immortality of wo. The Gospel preaches repentance for the remission of sins to all."

Here he interrupted me with a deep sigh, and exclaimed, "Ah! Dr. Warton, there is the difficulty; insuperable I fear by *me*. I cannot repent of my sins, and consequently I must not expect remission of them. My gloomy anticipations, therefore, are too well justified." "You cannot repent?" I said—"Granted; but what has that to do with the rejection of Christianity? Why, if there were no such religion as the Christian, if you were living by the light of nature alone, you would have thought repentance necessary, unless you reject a future state. Nay, tell me candidly, were you not, in the beginning of our conversation this very day, on the point of arguing, that our own reason, without a revelation, would satisfy us of the necessity and of the efficacy of repentance? Your not being able to repent, therefore, is not a valid reason for hesitating to accept Christianity." "It is very true," he replied: "but knowing that repentance is the great doctrine of the Gospel, and thinking that, if it could be proved to be the doctrine of nature and reason, we should have no need of the Gospel, in that respect at least, I was prepared to argue thus." "Very well," I said. "To make a rational system, in which repentance shall be necessary and useful, you would have assumed, no doubt, a future state of retribution; and then repentance comes in, does it not, to avert the punishment which might otherwise have been inflicted in that future state?"

"That is the way in which I should have argued," he replied, "but it would be ridiculous to do so now, when I stand confessed a sinner, an impenitent, incorrigible sinner; or corrected only, as to the practice of sin, by the uncontrollable effects of my disease, not by any voluntary change of sentiment. No, no! A state of retribution is not a state of my choice, or a state for *me*; nor is repentance, which should be preparatory to it; although repentance and retribution may be a discovery of that natural light which I might have pretended to reckon sufficient for us." "Repentance," I said, "in the way in which it may be entirely useful to us, is not a discovery of nature; it is truly a Scripture doctrine. It is discoverable, indeed, by human reason, (not that human reason ever actually discovered it,) that the best thing which a wicked man can do is to repent; so far nature may be supposed to dictate: but it is from Scripture alone that we learn the full extent of the efficacy of repentance, and why it is efficacious at all, namely, because of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. Then again, as to retribution, you know very well that the notions of the vulgar about it were mere fables and absurdities; you know, also, how the ancient philosophers disputed about a future state, and that they had no clear conceptions of it,—no, not even the wisest amongst them; and very few amongst them, indeed, had any idea of things being set right in that state by a just apportionment of rewards

and punishments. Socrates, perhaps, came nearest to it. It was finely said by him, that for a righteous man, whether living or dying, it must be well; and when he was pressed with the supposition, that in this life every possible calamity and injustice might befall his righteous man, he seems to insinuate, on that very ground, that another life was necessary to remedy the irregularities of this; to reward suffering virtue, and to punish successful vice. But, in truth, the whole business; in all its detail, is a matter of revelation. Deeply thinking men, like Socrates, might have caught some glimmerings of a reckoning to be made hereafter;—but of the awful day of a general judgment, the great Judge himself, the sentence which he will pronounce and the everlasting rewards and punishments to follow it, of these they could have learnt nothing by reason and argument;—all these are purely doctrines of Scripture. But this is scarcely to our present purpose. You no longer consider it worth contending for, whether repentance and retribution be discoveries of nature, or of the Gospel; if retribution be to take place, and the sinner must be condemned without repentance, in whatever way he comes to the knowledge of it, repentance is his great sheet-anchor, and he must cling to it inseparably to escape the wreck of his immortal soul.”

“Aye, aye,” he exclaimed, “but I should not have allowed the immortality of the soul.” “No,” I said, “nor the being of a God either, for we must have come to that at last.” He blushed, but continued: “Perhaps not, if I had persevered in the same sentiments with which I set out this morning; and I should have probably argued, that, unless the immortality of the soul and the being of a God were established on the firmest grounds, nothing else could be admitted for a moment. Not that I do not myself think that there is a God, and that the soul is immortal, instinctively, as it were, when I reflect seriously upon it; but I foolishly fancied that it would be some relief to my mind, if, when the question was argued, there should appear to be any failure of proof. But I yield so far; the suspicion, I am sure, would for ever haunt me; I will debate it therefore no more. There is a God; and the soul, for *me*, shall be henceforth immortal, and consequently destined to be judged hereafter for its doings here. I grant this; and therefore also, that, if possible, it must be cleansed by repentance from the stains with which this world may have defiled it. Repentance, then, I admit in theory, but I do not find how to practise it. At present my only sorrow is, that I can no longer pursue the enjoyments which constituted my former happiness; and you will not deign, I presume, to call *this* repentance.”

“No, indeed,” I said, “I should betray you if I did; the truth must not be concealed from you by *me*. *That* which you describe, is no godly sorrow, the fruit of real penitence; it is a mere world-

ly sorrow—a sorrow which produces death and not life—which would destroy the soul to all eternity, instead of cleansing it for eternal happiness. But strictly speaking, it is the blood of Christ only which cleanses from all sin. No repentance can undo, in any sense, what has once been done. In *Him*, therefore, must you lay your foundation; you must build upon that rock; from faith towards *Him* must spring the true repentance, which is never to be repented of itself. This repentance, believe me, is no merely human work, and therefore as yet you have it not; you seek it not from above from whence alone it comes, by the instrumentality of the third person in the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, who, with the Father and the Son together, is one God. I told you that this doctrine was no idle speculation, and now you may begin to feel so yourself.”

“I remember,” he said, “what you asserted about this doctrine, very well; it appeared so exceedingly extraordinary to me, that I could not indeed readily forget it. But you laid, I think, the greatest stress upon the divinity of Jesus Christ, without the acknowledgment of which you affirmed that a man, wishing to be a Christian, could not stir a single step; in short, that he would have no inducement to set about the task of repentance and reformation of life, because he could not know or suppose that any atonement for sin had been made. I cannot describe to you how difficult all this appears to me; you must go back therefore, if you please, to these points: but I am prepared, I assure you, to listen to your explanations, or to debate the matter with you, in a very different spirit from what I had intended. Before, I trembled at the idea of believing such things; now, I fear lest I may never be brought to believe them.”

I glanced at Mrs. Harrison, and I imagined, by her look and gestures, that she was secretly thanking God for this wonderful change in the tone and sentiments of her brother, and imploring His aid for the great work which still remained. Much indeed was done, but much was still to do, and could only be done by the divine help. I acknowledged that help already, for never did any conversation begin with so little prospect of success as on this day. In the very outset it was turned out of the channel in which the sceptic himself designed it to proceed, and took a much more fortunate range, as was proved by the event. But how to take advantage of the present favourable posture of things was the problem now to be solved, and before I had thought one single minute about it, the coach stopped. We had arrived, without being aware of it, on the ridge of a hill, which formed a natural terrace of a considerable length, from whence, on both sides, there was a rich, diversified prospect of the surrounding country. On the western side particularly, the scenery was strikingly magnificent; the declivity of the hill was clothed with a fine hanging wood down to

the bottom, except that here and there some rugged rocks, in various picturesque forms, started out from amongst the trees, and filled the eye with surprise and delight. Below, in the depths of the valley, a river was winding along, of ample dimensions, and all alive with sails. On its banks were countless villas glittering in the sun. Tracing the stream downwards, you saw it at the distance of some miles approaching the great town in our neighbourhood, the spires and towers of which were clearly discernible. Some blue hills, very remote, made the back-ground of the picture.

Such was the view from the carriage itself, well able to charm away every sorrow, and to disperse every gloom, but that of despair. Mr. Compton was very desirous that his sister, who was a stranger to it, should be conducted to various points not accessible but on foot; and that she should have time to admire every thing. I took her, therefore, under my charge to the first seat, a little below the brow of the hill, where a glade, opened through the wood, let in the chief features of the landscape. Whilst we were seated there, Mr. Compton drove backwards and forwards on the green sward at the top.

Mrs. Harrison was sufficiently awake to the beauties of this enchanting scene; but the state of her brother was nearest her heart; so, after a little delay, she said to me, "Indeed, Dr. Warton, I flatter myself that we have advanced many steps to-day. I had a little glimmering of hope in my mind, when my brother made such an arrangement as to leave Mr. Harrison at home; for he feels towards him a degree of reserve, which would prevent him from unbosoming his real sentiments in his presence, on so momentous a subject as that of religion; but the hope vanished, when he refused to answer your questions; and then again was suddenly realised by the free, unexpected declaration of his opinions, and still more by his avowal of a determination to confer amicably with you, and to relinquish all cavilling in your future discussions on Christianity." "Very well, my dear Madam," I replied; "but how are we now to proceed?" "We depend entirely upon your judgment and kindness," she answered; "but he has himself pointed out some topics, which he wishes to understand, and which are at the same time, of essential consequence to the faith and practice of every Christian; you will, without doubt, be so good as to go on with the work which you have begun, and explain those topics to him." "By all means," I said; "but what is to be the mode of explanation? Will he admit the Scriptures, and be satisfied with texts produced out of them? Or must we pursue a different method?" "I fear it will be necessary," she replied, "to pursue a different method. If he admits the Scriptures, his conviction will be an easy task to you." "I am not so sure of *that*," I said: "it will certainly be a most astonishing point gained; but he may dispute

about the interpretation. Suppose he were to say, 'when pressed with a text, that different sects of religionists interpreted that text in different ways, and then argue, that it is impossible for him to know which is in the right?' "He will yield, I think, to *your* authority, Dr. Warton," she answered: "besides, you will be able to cite the text in the original language; and as my brother was educated at Oxford, and before that at a great school, I should hope that he had not so entirely forgotten his Greek, as to be incompetent to judge of your arguments." "If that be the case," I said, "we shall proceed smoothly and rapidly, so far as the interpretation is concerned. But to understand Christianity, and to be a Christian oneself, are almost as wide from each other as east from west. Whence is to come the Christian Spirit? But I do not despair, with God's blessing." "I trust not," she replied; "so, if you please, we will quit this beautiful spot, after snatching another hasty view of it, and return to the object of our solicitude."

Upon this, she rose from the seat; and when I had told her to whom some of the most attractive residences belonged, we reascended the hill; and having soon met the carriage, we resumed our places in it, and the coachman was ordered to drive homewards. Something was said about the noble prospects which we had just been viewing, and Mrs. Harrison thanked her brother for bringing her to see them; but the more important matter which had engaged, us before, seemed still to be in possession of all our faculties. Mr. Compton himself was satisfied with making a very few inquiries, and was evidently anxious to revert to the former subject of conversation. I was ready to follow wherever he might choose to lead me, and I waited to see if he would propose any thing; but before he did so, Mrs. Harrison, alarmed at the waste of such precious moments, interrupted the painful silence, and prepared the way for the renewal of our religious discussions.

"Well, my dear brother," she said, "I am longing to get back to the point at which we stopped upon our arrival at this beautiful scene. I find that I receive from these discussions an accession to my knowledge, and a confirmation of my faith. Will you mention, therefore, to Dr. Warton what chiefly presses upon your mind under the present circumstances?" "I am thinking about it," was his answer; "and it appears to *me*, that it would clear the road for the reception of other things, if Dr. Warton would enlarge a little upon repentance. It is a dictate of nature, to a certain limit at least; although I am aware that the main dependance of the heathens was upon sacrifice. If they offended their gods, they looked to sacrifice, I believe, and not to repentance, as the means of reconciliation with them. How they came to think of sacrifices, which seem quite out of the way, and to neglect repentance, which so slight an effort of reason might have taught them, I am totally at a loss to conjecture. However, in the course of

ages and the progress of discovery, which is the same in morals as in other things, we may naturally suppose that repentance would be discovered ; and if a real reform took place in the lives of men, what more could be desired ? What need of such a scheme as the Christian atonement, which appears to *me* inexplicable ?”

“ A plausible, if not a satisfactory, explanation may be found,” I said, “ for the several matters which you propose to me. With respect to sacrifice, the origin may be doubtful ; but the rite itself seems to point very clearly to the doctrine of atonement. If men themselves were the inventors of sacrifice, it is hardly possible, one should think, but that they must have had a decided notion of atoning for their sins by the death of another animal in their own stead. By such a proceeding an acknowledgment might have been implied, that they deserved death in their own persons, but that they trusted to the mercy of their deities to accept the death of some less valuable living creature substituted for them. On the other hand, if sacrifice was an original injunction of God himself, there can be no doubt whatever of its being intended to accustom the minds of men, from the beginning, to the idea of an atonement ; that they might be the better prepared to understand, and accept, the great atonement that was made, by the one sacrifice of Christ, once for all, for the sins of the whole world ; when all other sacrifices were thenceforth to be abolished, and men were in future to put their trust in *that* alone. At all events, when God selected the Jews for a particular purpose, he adopted the rite of sacrifice ; and the sacred authors tell us, that all the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, and that of the Paschal Lamb especially, were but types and shadows of the sacrifice of Christ, to which alone they owed all their efficacy.

“ With respect to repentance, which you think so natural, if men fell into the way of sacrifice in preference to it, though you cannot account for sacrifice, you ought to conclude, that they were aware of some great difficulty, or some great defect, in repentance, which occasioned them to neglect it. The difficulty might be, that they were reluctant to amend their lives ; and the defect, that repentance was no atonement. Whatever might be their future conduct, still they might expect to be punished for the past ; and consequently there was such a want of encouragement to abandon vice and pursue virtue, that few resorted to repentance, and still fewer proposed it as a remedy. But how different is the case under our holy religion ! Atonement is the very corner-stone of the whole building ; an atonement, too, not by the blood of bulls and goats, which had no value, except in consequence of God’s appointment and promise ; but by the blood of the Son of God, which had an inherent value of its own, inestimable and infinite, and was therefore adequate to purge away the sins of all mankind. On the strength of this atonement, however we may lament the past, yet

if we obey God's righteous laws in future, we need not fear. Another has been bruised for our iniquities; the sins of us all were laid on *Him*; and by his stripes we are healed. God is perfectly reconciled to us; we may cast off the burdensome load of former guilt which weighed us to the ground, and begin a new career with unimpeded vigour and unincumbered hopes.

"Upon the whole, the doctrine of an atonement seems to accord with the common sense of mankind; and although, as I said early in the morning, they might have thought repentance the best method of proceeding in cases of sin, yet they could never have thought that even the most perfect repentance would undo the past, or, in other words, be a sufficient reason to induce the Deity to overlook it. A simple change of life does nothing towards the vindication of God's violated laws; the divine sanction is trampled upon with manifest impunity; there is no punishment to operate as an example to others, or a penalty to the offenders themselves. This system, it is plain, would not do for human governors, and much less will it do for the great moral Governor of the universe. But by our Gospel system his justice is satisfied, and his wrath appeased; and he can now, therefore, without any impeachment of his other attributes, exercise the lovely attribute of mercy. He can pardon upon repentance."

When I had finished, Mrs. Harrison exclaimed immediately, not waiting for Mr. Compton to speak, "Now, my good brother, how does this matter appear to you? I confess at once for myself, that I never saw it so clearly before. Dr. Warton, you set out with telling us, that we were only to expect a plausible solution of the suggested difficulties; at least you spoke with diffidence of your being able to give a satisfactory one: but to *me*, I assure you, this is quite satisfactory, and I think it must be so to *you*, brother."

So much ingenuousness on the part of Mrs. Harrison appeared to produce a good effect on Mr. Compton, and he said, "What you have advanced, Dr. Warton, appears certainly to be well worthy of a most attentive consideration; but the Christian scheme would be more intelligible to *me*, if it were merely an abolition of the tedious and costly ceremonies of sacrifice; a confirmation of what nature prompted in respect to repentance; and the admission of it as the cancelling of the past. Then I would accept Jesus Christ for a person divinely commissioned to republish, in its best form, and with its greatest force, the whole law of nature, and more particularly the essential doctrine of the efficacy of repentance; to give mankind clearer and more consistent notions of a future state of rewards and punishments; and to bear witness to his own sincerity, and to the truth of what he preached, by his sufferings and death. This I can understand very well; when I

go out of these bounds, I am like a man wading beyond his depth in some dark and fathomless ocean."

"Then," I said, "you would consider Jesus Christ (setting aside his divine mission) in the same light as you would Socrates, or rather, perhaps, as Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer; as a martyr, and not a Redeemer and Saviour?" "I would," he answered; "*that* is the easiest way of viewing the matter, and of explaining it." "It may seem so," I said, "at first sight, perhaps, and theoretically, if you leave the Scriptures out of the question. But have you thought at all how to get rid of the Scriptures, or of the particular passages which militate directly against your theory, or how to reconcile them with it?" "No, I have not," he confessed; "my theory is but just come into my imagination, in consequence of our recent conferences." "Well, then, I must tell you," I said, "that the Gospel is totally irreconcilable with such a theory, nor could you make it otherwise by any cutting and slashing whatever. The doctrines and the history are so interwoven together that you cannot separate them without destroying the whole. It is like the coat woven throughout from the top to the bottom without a seam; it is not to be parted; you may cast lots upon it, if you please, but you must take all or none."

Here I paused for his answer; and, after appearing to turn the matter over in his thoughts for a few moments, he said, "I am not disposed to debate with you to-day the genuineness of the Scriptures. That there was such a person as Jesus Christ; that he was the founder of the Christian religion; and that he was put to death by crucifixion, we know from heathen authors; and I believe that all the further information which we have about himself and his religion, in the vast variety of books that have been written upon the subject, is either fabulous or taken from the Scriptures themselves. At all events, I will admit them for the present, as the fountain-head from which we must draw materials for argument." "To come to the point then at once," I said, "take that memorable text, which I have already quoted for another purpose; having mentioned it before, it suggests itself first to my mind now;—'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Now, what a number of particulars have we here, which are quite inexplicable on *your* supposition. First, Jesus Christ is not simply a man, like one of the prophets or martyrs. Secondly, he is the son of God in so peculiar and appropriate a sense as to be God's only begotten Son. Thirdly, it is necessary to believe in him, a distinction which none of the prophets or martyrs ever arrogated to themselves. Fourthly, the consequence of believing in him is two-fold; an escape from perishing like the brutes, or from being punished eternally like the devils; and the

attainment of immortality, or of infinite bliss and glory. And fifthly, that God gave him to the world, because he loved the world in an extraordinary degree, and for the very purpose that the world might believe in him, and thus be saved from wrath and admitted into grace. Whether we comprehend these things or not, makes no difference now: this is the brief outline of the Christian religion, and you cannot square it to your theory. The single expression, that God gave him, leads inevitably to the most momentous conclusions—Gave him for what? Undoubtedly to die. And why to die? That men may believe in him, you are expressly told. Yes; and what is more, that their belief in him may purchase for them the astonishing gift of everlasting life. But what has their believing in him, as a person who died, to do with their own attainment of life? Ah! Mr. Compton, in what other way shall we attempt to explain this but as the rest of the Scriptures explain it? Why, he died for *them*; *his* death was the atonement for *their* sins; and by their faith in him they are put into a capacity of reaping the benefits of that death, which are, freedom from guilt and punishment, and restoration to righteousness, happiness, and immortality.”

After saying so much I stopped, as before, to, ascertain whether he was satisfied, or not; but before he had determined what his reply should be, Mrs. Harrison interposed, and reminded us of the form in which our blessed Lord and Saviour had instituted the holy sacrament of his body and blood. “Upon presenting the bread, his words were, ‘Take; eat; this is my body, which is given for you;’ and upon presenting the wine, his words were, ‘This is my blood of the new Testament, which is shed for *you*, and for many, for the remission of sins.’” “They are decisive,” I said, “both that his being given implied his death, and that his death was a sacrifice—the shedding of his blood, for the remission of sins marks the atonement incontestably; and it is the general doctrine of Scripture, that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission. What is your opinion of this, Mr. Compton?”

“That all the heathens,” he answered, “trusted in their sacrifices, I have allowed already, and it cannot be denied; and the Jews also did the same. Now might not Jesus Christ, being a Jew, have taken advantage of this feature in the Jewish law, and so represented his own death as to make it appear to accord with that law, as well as with the prejudices of the heathens?” “What!” I said; “before his death took place?” If his partisans had done this after his death, he himself having given no hint of it during his life the objection might have been worth considering. But in the way in which you put it, it is not tenable for a moment. Besides, the very supposition that he represented things differently from what they really were, insinuates that he was an impostor or an enthusiast; an impostor, if he knowingly stated an untruth; an enthu-

siast, if he fancied himself to be appointed as a sacrifice and atonement for the sins of mankind, whilst he had no claim to so sublime an office. But his whole character, and all his actions, and all the rest of his doctrines, and every precept which he delivered, negative at once the insinuation of imposture and enthusiasm. He preached and was the pattern of every virtue; he performed miracles; he foretold future events; he foretold his own death, exactly as it occurred; and I must, therefore, believe that his death was what he represented it to be."

"Well, Dr. Warton," he said, suppose we relinquish this charge for the present. I should be glad to know whether the oriental manner of speaking figuratively will not account for a great deal, without resorting to such difficult doctrines, which, in fact, rest upon the mere letter. In the institution of the sacrament, for instance, which my sister has just mentioned, you dispute against the Roman Catholics, for a figurative in preference to a literal meaning." Then, like a person pleased with a new thought, which he imagines will work wonders, he added, "I suspect, that if this figurative mode of speaking be well considered, it would enable us to solve, in a simple manner, much that is perplexing to the intellect, and revolting to our most deeply rooted feelings, if taken literally."

"It has been well considered long ago," I answered; "and with respect to the prophetic parts of the Bible, which are most figurative, it is not difficult to establish certain rules, by which the true meaning may be fixed. Sometimes the prophecy itself is afterwards explained, as our Saviour explained his parables; sometimes one part of a prophecy, which is dark is explained by another part which is clear; sometimes, again, one whole obscure prophecy is illustrated by others which are less so; and there are various ways besides, which might be mentioned, if it were necessary to go fully into the subject. You may conceive, therefore, how the language of prophecy comes at length to be pretty well understood; but with respect to the doctrines of the New Testament, the same modes are not so applicable. Indeed the expression is in general not figurative, but perfectly simple. I do not mean, however, that one thing does not help to explain another; or that parts of a thing may not help to explain the whole; but only that no general rules of interpretation can precisely be laid down. Take an example from what Mrs. Harrison suggested to us. Our Lord said, that no man could be saved without eating his flesh and drinking his blood; and this appeared to many of his followers to be a doctrine so hard of digestion, that they absolutely abandoned him rather than embrace it. Yet he told them, in that particular case, that his words were not to be interpreted literally, although he did not then tell them what the true meaning was. And perhaps we should never have known it, if it had not been afterwards explained by the in-

stitution of the sacrament of the bread and wine, which he called his body and blood, and which he enjoined us all to eat and drink, in memory of his death, to the end of the world. Thus every difficulty arising from the figurative mode of expression might well be supposed to have been entirely cleared away. But the Roman Catholics were not willing to think so, and they will still have *that* to be literal, which he insinuated to be spiritual, or figurative; and consequently, they invented, and continue to uphold, their doctrine of transubstantiation, to explain the words ‘this is my body,’ and ‘this is my blood.’ Here, however, for the right explanation of *these* expressions, we may justly refer them to the innumerable similar forms of expression, which are undoubtedly figurative; ‘I am the vine;’ ‘I am the gate,’ and a thousand others. The meaning of these is evident at once; and I do not see why the meaning of the sacramental form should puzzle any body more than they do.

“Take another instance of a doctrine which has been also previously mentioned; ‘I and my Father are one.’ Viewing this in the abstract, it might mean, first, I and my Father are one Person; but when we go to the original, and observe that the expression is *ἐν*, and not *εἰς*, we give up that interpretation at once. Next then it must mean, I and my Father are one thing; but in what sense one thing? There is some union between them undoubtedly; but whether a union of sentiment only, or of substance, and consequently of sentiment too, we cannot decide by this passage alone. If it be a union of substance, which *we* of this church affirm, then the expression *ἐν* is literal; if it be a union of sentiment only, the expression is figurative; and we cannot decide the question, without a comparison of this passage with others, and, perhaps, not without a large view of the whole Gospel.

“You will perceive by these examples that your suggestion has been attended to, when the reason of the thing demands it, and when it is warranted by the rest of Scripture; but in the case of the doctrine of the atonement, the expressions seem to admit but of a single meaning, and *that* the literal one. Those expressions too are to be met with perpetually. The very word ‘ransom’ defies, I think, the possibility of perversion, and settles the question for ever. ‘He gave his life a ransom for many.’ How can you, by any stretch of ingenuity, interpret this otherwise than that the death of Christ was in the stead of the death of others?”

“That is a very strong term certainly,” he replied in a tone of moderation, “nor do I know how to rebut your interpretation of it; but I cannot so easily reconcile myself to the doctrine, which, in its literal sense, it implies. After all, however, if a ransom were necessary, or expedient, might it not have been paid by a mere man, supposing him to be a man of perfect justice, and one who fulfilled the whole moral law of virtue and goodness?”—

“Unfortunately,” I said, “your scheme abounds with insuperable difficulties. First, where will you find such a man? The world never produced a phoenix of that sort; and there is an end of the matter. But, secondly, if you could find such a person, how would his life or death operate as an atonement for others? Will you adopt the Roman Catholic notion, and assume, that he might perform works of supererogation, and so leave behind him an abundant stock of merit, out of which the deficiency of all others may be supplied for ever? No, no; this is too ridiculous. I ask you, is not every man, in every situation in which he may be placed, under a sort of moral obligation, to act according to the most perfect law of his nature, or according to the best light which he enjoys?” He allowed it. “Can he then,” I asked again, “do more than his duty, or more than is proper and right for himself?” “I believe,” he answered, “that I must grant, he cannot.”—“Well, then,” I said, “his power of making an atonement for others is quite out of the question. It vanishes at once, and we are compelled to resort to some one, who is more than man; to some one, who, possessing indeed the human nature, and executing in that nature, by the help of a divine Spirit residing within him, every particle of the moral law of righteousness, has something far greater and better to offer for the fallen race of mankind, to propitiate an offended God, and to reconcile Him to them; even the transcendent, unspeakable merit of a being, who, having himself the forms of God, hesitated not to empty himself of all his eternal splendour and glory, to hide himself under a poor degraded vesture of mortal flesh, and to submit to pain and ignominy, and death; thus becoming a sacrifice infinite in value, and commensurate with the infinite extent of sin. O what an argument for love, and obedience, on our parts! O what a pattern of condescension and humility for *us* to imitate in our conduct to our fellow-creatures! But, above all, what a lesson of awe and fear! How forcibly calculated to inspire us with a thorough hatred and abhorrence of sin; that monstrous evil, which God would not, or could not pardon, without a sacrifice, so wonderfully, so incomparably great!”

Just at this moment the carriage stopped at the Rectory, and so, without waiting for any reply, I jumped out, and left them.

§ 2.—MR. COMPTON, MR. LANGSTONE, &c.

REFLECTING afterwards upon this long conversation, when I was sitting quietly at home in the course of the same day, I could not but flatter myself, that, upon the whole, great good had been done. That he was convinced upon all the branches of the subject which we had discussed I was far from thinking; but that his mind was satisfied upon some points, and his opinions shaken upon others, I had no doubt whatever. With respect to a real, practical repentance, I did not yet expect it. More pain and suffering, and less chance of returning to the world, seemed necessary to wean him from it in a sufficient degree to make a solid basis for an effectual change of his heart and affections. But things, I trusted, were in the right train, if it might please God to prolong his life for a certain period. A sudden death, however, was to be feared; and a sudden death would probably ruin every thing. Under all the circumstances, therefore, delay was dangerous, and most sedulously to be avoided; yet events could not be hastened, nor opportunities created at will.

With these impressions I called very early in the afternoon of the following day. Mrs. Harrison was gone out, but Mr. Harrison, for whom I next inquired, informed me that Mr. Compton, after a restless night, had got up late, and was laid as usual on the sofa, and had no spirits to attempt any thing else. Orders, however, had been given that no visitors should be denied admittance to him; so Mr. Harrison, without scruple, conducted me to him at once; but he was unable to satisfy my curiosity as to the results of yesterday. Mr. Compton, he said, had been very silent and thoughtful during the whole evening after his return from the drive, and had made no remark, even to his sister, upon the conversation which had passed, although she tried often to lead him to it. Yet it was evident that he was full of it, and that his mind was deeply at work upon the grave matters which had been debated between us. Nor had night and solitude, as far as Mr. Harrison could ascertain, afforded any truce to his troubled thoughts.

Being hastily informed of these particulars as we ascended the staircase, I expressed my fears upon first seeing him, lest yesterday's ride might have been too much for his strength; but he assured me, that he had felt no unusual fatigue in consequence of it, and that, as for sleepless nights, they were his almost constant companions; "and I hope," he said, "that I have profited by the last, in mind at least, if not in body." Upon this I was all attention to hear what account he would give of himself, and without doubt he would have proceeded to gratify my eager desire of get-

ting to the bottom of his feelings, had not a servant at this very moment announced the name of Mr. Langstone. "Where is he?" cried Mr. Compton. "He is on horseback at the door," answered the servant; "and he bade me say, Sir, that he wished very much to see you." "By all means, then, bring him up," said Mr. Compton. "But what shall we do with *you*, Dr. Warton?" he added, when the servant had disappeared. "Mr. Langstone is rather brisk in his manners, and, I fear, has no respect for the clergy, to whose society he has been entirely unaccustomed; and he will probably assail me with many an arrow out of his quiver of raillery, if he should discover that I have talked so much of late with one of that cloth. Will you call another time, or will you step into the adjoining room, and wait till he goes?" "I will stay where I am," I replied, "if you will allow me. I am curious to see this redoubted knight, and perhaps I shall break a lance with him. I know his character full well, and I must prevent him, if I can, from doing you mischief."

Mr. Compton was in a terrible fright when he heard my determination; but before he could attempt to change it, Mr. Langstone entered, and exclaimed, as he rapidly approached the sofa, "Well, Compton, how are you, my good fellow? Better, I hope, and likely to be amongst us again soon. But where is Laura, *'amata nobis, quantum amabitur nulla?'*" Mr. Compton held out his hand, but said nothing. He was vexed, as I supposed, that I should discover with what sort of persons, and how, he had spent his days; but he evidently feared still more lest he should be covered with shame, when his weakness in admitting a clergyman to converse with him on matters of religion should become known to this blunt and profligate votary of pleasure. And that Mr. Langstone would both blab every thing, and find out every thing, he had little doubt; so heedless was he of character, and so likely to pester him with questions about Laura, and his present plans, and what not.

Mr. Langstone grasped Mr. Compton's hand, and exclaimed again, "What, man, not a word to greet me after two months' absence? Not a word about yourself? No Laura, as in the good old times?" At last the sick man said, "Oh, Langstone, I have been very ill! The game was nearly up, and the lamps put out! I totter still on the brink of the grave!" "Come, come," cried the other, "cheer up, man! you will not die this bout, I warrant you." Then suddenly turning round, and seeing Mr. Harrison and me, who had risen upon his entrance and had not reseated ourselves, "What," he said, "are these your doctors? why, I believe, I have dropped in upon you in the midst of a consultation. Well, gentlemen, what is your opinion of my friend's case?" He would have run on, but seeing us look very grave, he stopped short in his career, and Mr. Compton immediately said, pointing to each of us in succession, "that is Mr. Harrison, my brother-

in-law, and this is Dr. Warton." Upon this Mr. Langstone bowed slightly to Mr. Harrison, and when I was prepared for the same civility, he drawled out in the attitude of one thinking, "Dr. Warton? Why, is not Dr. Warton the parson of your parish, whom we used to— I beg his pardon; the rector I should have called him." "Oh! it does not matter, Sir," I said, smiling; "if you look into Blackstone, you will find that parson is the more honourable title." And then addressing myself to Mr. Compton, I told him that his friend Mr. Langstone seemed to expect to find an M. D. rather than a D. D. by his side; but that there were times, perhaps, when the D. D. might be the most useful, although I hoped that in his case the M. D. might be useful too.

Mr. Compton shook his head, and said, "Well, well: sit down all of you. What will become of *me* is very doubtful. But I must introduce you, Langstone, to Dr. Warton. If he were not present I would describe him to you." "You have often done it," exclaimed Langstone sneeringly, and interrupting him. "Which description am I to abide by, that of Compton well or that of Compton sick? That of the courageous or that of the timorous Compton? That of the enemy or that of the slave to superstition?" This was a difficult attack for Mr. Compton to parry. It disconcerted and abashed him, and the more so, because he had been every moment in expectation of it, and he was yet too much of a novice in the ways of religion to withstand even a single sarcasm. The seed had fallen upon ground which lacked moisture and depth of soil, and therefore was too likely to wither away upon the first attack of heat.

When the hope of being able to throw a shield before him, I interposed and said, "It is no wonder, if men see things with a different eye in sickness and in health; nor does it follow that the courage which health inspires is a wise courage, or the fear which is inspired by sickness a foolish fear. Another thing, too, I have generally observed—that the enemies of true religion are the greatest slaves to superstition. Have you none of these, Mr. Langstone, amongst your own acquaintance? Mr. Compton, I dare say, has ridiculed me often under other circumstances. I beg he will make no excuses about it. His change of conduct is the best apology; and I trust that he will have no cause to regret, but every cause to rejoice, in that change. If his fears have wrought upon him, I admire and applaud his present fears more than his former courage. I will venture to use a strong term: his former courage was nothing but fool-hardihood. The approach of death is terrible to all. What must it be to one who knows not whither he is going? It has pleased God, merciful in the midst of severity, to show Mr. Compton his irresistible power, without striking him to the ground; and Mr. Compton has the wisdom to look to the hand

which inflicts the blow with awe and fear ; and to reflect within himself, and to advise with persons of supposed competence (with the parson, if you will,) upon the steps which are to be taken by one in his precarious condition. It is too desperate a plunge to be made blindfold. So thought Lord Rochester—one of the wittiest and most profligate of men, whilst his courage, as you call it, supported him ; but, at length, when assailed by the King of Terrors, a willing, and a patient, and an humble listener to the arguments and the counsels of a Christian bishop.”

Thus I spoke, with very little idea of producing any good effect upon Mr. Langstone, but with the greatest of doing good to Mr. Compton ; into whom I endeavoured to infuse right sentiments by a side-wind, as it were, and by assuming that he acted on the principles which I conceived to be proper for him. He made no remark ; nor did Mr. Langstone at once. All he did at first was to stare with astonishment ; sometimes at *me*, sometimes at Mr. Compton, sometimes at Mr. Harrison. But very soon suspecting by our countenances, I suppose, that we were all in earnest, and all of the same opinion, he exclaimed, “ Upon my honour, Dr. Warton, it makes no difference to *you*, I perceive, whether you are in or out of your pulpit, or with or without your surplice. You can preach equally well in any place, and in any garb. But as you mention that fellow Rochester—that most cowardly of all poltroons, that base betrayer and belier of his own principles, of the principles of his whole life—I must tell you, that Compton and I have long ago made up our minds about his character ; and that we thoroughly despise him, mean wretch as he was !”

The acrimony and the malignity with which Mr. Langstone uttered this philippic against Lord Rochester are quite indescribable. He almost gnashed his teeth with rage ; and whilst the storm lasted, none of us attempted to speak : but having had its vent, it soon subsided ; and he resumed in a milder tone, “ No, no, Sir ! we shall not imitate this hero of yours, whom the men of your black-cloth are so fond of quoting ; we are made of firmer stuff—I and Compton ; we have none of those womanish fears.” “ God only knows,” I said, with a solemnity which thrilled the sick man—“ God only knows,” I reiterated the momentous truth, “ who shall be indulged and blessed with the opportunity of imitating Lord Rochester ! They who wish for it, may wish for it too late ; they who seek after it, may seek too late ; and they who disdain the thought of it, must abide the perilous issue. It is throwing the dice for their lives ; or rather, I should say, for their souls !” Then relaxing into a different tone, I continued thus : “ But why, Mr. Langstone, should you make so sure of Mr. Compton’s opinions on this point ? A wise man changes his opinions according to circumstances, and as new light breaks in upon him. May not Mr. Compton, therefore, think differently now of Lord Rochester from

what he did formerly, in the same manner, as it is plain by your seeing me here, that he thinks differently of *me*?" "Nothing is too absurd to happen" he cried indignantly; "why Compton has you here by his side he can best explain. Neither he nor I had any personal dislike to you, Dr. Warton; for we had no acquaintance with you whatever. It is the genus, not the individual, against which we bear arms, and would emancipate mankind, if we could, from their leading-strings. I tell you this fairly and openly; I am not a man of concealment. O, what mischiefs has Christianity produced in the world! and the clergy alone bolster it up from falling! They have bestridden us, and kept us in disgraceful subjection for ages. But with respect to Rochester, the foolish story about him pretends to tell us, that the prophecies, forsooth, converted him. Truly, if it were so, the man's intellect must have been turned topsy-turvy, as I rather indeed suspect; for never was there such a farrago of nonsense as those self-styled prophecies. I and Compton examined them together, Dr. Warton; and I know he agrees with me, that they are a heap of confusion; a mass of unintelligible, unconnected, incoherent rhapsodies—darker than the darkest oracles of the heathens themselves. If Rochester's conversion arose from these, Compton, I am confident, can never agree with him, or stoop to the same degradation." Thus he went on, in his own peculiar dogmatical style, unused to contradiction, and expecting to bear down all before him.

"I am afraid, Mr. Langstone," I said coolly, in reply, "that you have not given yourself sufficient time to study the prophecies. May I be permitted to ask, whether you understand the original language in which they were written?" "What, the Hebrew? Not I indeed," he answered petulantly. "But," I asked again, "you have read, I presume, some or all of the great commentators, who have explained the prophecies?" "I read those musty folios and quartos!" he replied, as before. "No, in truth, I have not been guilty of such a waste of my eyes and my time, which have been better employed." "Well, Mr. Langstone," I said, "but you have looked at least into Lowth's translation of Isaiah, which is neither musty by age, nor ponderous in size; for it may be had in the convenient and inviting shape of an octavo?" He now became seriously angry upon being convicted of having taken no pains to understand what he had so harshly condemned; and he, therefore, asserted, with the greater positiveness and obstinacy, that it would be the most absurd thing imaginable to sit down to study *that* which no study could render intelligible. "But Lowth," I said, "and many of the other translators and commentators, were men of immense learning, and prodigious talents, were they not?" "They may be," he replied, "for what I know to the contrary. One thing I am sure of, that I shall never trouble myself to discover their blunders." "Well," I said, "whether they blundered

or not, at least they must have supposed, that the prophecies were capable of being made intelligible, by the help of translations, of notes, of commentaries, of criticisms, of paraphrases, of dissertations. Do not their very labours prove this?" "It matters not one hair, what they supposed," he answered impatiently; "I stick to plain common sense, out of which I shall never be argued. Besides, was not Lowth advanced to the rank and wealth of a bishop? His evidence, therefore, is interested, and must be set aside. I suspect there are few of his cloth who would not attempt to prove that black is white for the sake of a bishopric." "Set him aside, then," I said, "at once and without scruple, as well as all the rest of his fraternity. But there was one Newton, who wrote a dissertation upon the prophecies; not the eminent bishop of that name, who also wrote upon the same subject; but a much more eminent man—indeed the most eminent, perhaps, whom the world had seen; Sir Isaac I mean—that illustrious mathematician, who dived into the depths of Nature, and ascended victorious up to Nature's God; a layman too; no candidate for rich pluralities, or bishoprics; simple-minded like a child,—but in power of reasoning mighty as a giant; in grasp of intellect sublime as an angel; what shall we do with *him*? Shall we set *him* aside also, as a hypocrite, or an idiot; or shall we not rather bow, as to a superior being, who bent the whole force of his vast and comprehensive genius to the explanation of the works and the word of God alike?"

Mr. Langstone not seeming to know exactly how to dispose of Newton, Mr. Compton interposed and said, "We who stand up for reason, Langstone, must take care to have reason on our side, and not to go against her. We cannot, therefore, deny the great authority of Newton; who must have thought the prophecies capable of being explained, and also of high consequence, or he would never have interrupted his mathematical pursuits, which brought him so much glory, for the sake of attending to those prophecies. But, certainly, Dr. Warton, upon a cursory view of them, they did appear to *me*, as my friend Langstone has just stated, very obscure, very incoherent, and generally unintelligible. However, there is no wonder that men attached to Christianity, whether from laudable or blameable motives, should attempt to explain them; for Christianity cannot stand without them." "Very true," exclaimed Mr. Langstone, somewhat relieved by the latter part of Mr. Compton's speech: "this accounts perfectly for all the misplaced labours of so many bigots; but the prophecies are lame legs for any thing to stand upon." "It is the more marvellous, then," I said, "that Christianity has stood so long upon such a rotten foundation, and seems likely to stand to the end of time. But how do you assert that Christianity cannot stand without the prophecies, Mr. Compton?" "I mean," he answered, "that the evidence of prophecy, be it what it may, is relied upon

as one of the strongest." "A revelation from God," I said, "abstractedly speaking, requires not to be attested by evidence of any particular sort. All that is absolutely necessary is, that it should be attested by sufficient evidence of some sort or other. Now miracles do this for Christianity; and, therefore, all other evidences, and prophecies amongst the rest, might appear to be *ex abundanti*, and supererogatory; and, consequently, not worthy of all that learning and talent which have been expended upon them. But the fact is, that Jesus Christ himself appealed to the prophecies in proof of his being the Messiah; and, therefore, we are bound to search the prophecies, to try his pretensions by his own test, and to see whether his appeal be founded in truth. If he had claimed to be simply a divine Messenger, miracles would have been enough for him; but he claimed to be the Messiah; a particular divine Messenger, supposed to be promised and described in the prophecies; and, therefore, we must of necessity look into those prophecies, to ascertain whether he corresponds to the description there given of the Messiah, or not; and if we find no traces of him there, then, indeed, his religion cannot stand. It is important to understand this matter rightly, and therefore I have tried to place it on the proper footing."

Mr. Harrison had been hitherto silent, but at this point of the discussion he interfered very opportunely, and said, "I am sure, we ought all of us to be much obliged to Dr. Warton, for his clear account of the only way in which the prophecies become an essential evidence of Christianity. I confess, at all events, however, for myself, that the subject had not struck me precisely in this light before, and I am glad to be better informed. But, then, now comes the great question, whether there are, indeed, to be found in the prophecies intelligible traces of such a person as Jesus Christ actually was, in all the leading circumstances of his history; or whether every thing in those prophecies, relating to the Jewish Messiah, be not so vague, and indefinite, and obscure, as to defy such an application, without being wrested and tortured unreasonably for the very purpose. I am aware that the best and the greatest of men, of the laity as well as of the clergy, have decided for themselves in the first affirmative; and to *their* authority I most willingly submit myself, being incompetent, with my own unassisted powers, to enter deeply enough into the investigation; and Mr. Langstone must excuse me, if I say, that I think his charges against the prophecies, thrown out at random, and in the absence of all proof of sufficient inquiry, are by no means weighty enough to be set in the scale against the combined, accumulated judgment of the very soundest judges in the world. But nevertheless, I presume, you will allow, Dr. Warton, that the prophecies are dark and obscure; and if so, I should be gratified with hearing how you account for it."

This quiet and discreet way of arguing the question, and of asking for further information—was admirably adapted to Mr. Compton's situation, and conducted him gently to the point where we wished to lead him; but it did not appear that Mr. Langstone's abrupt, and hasty, and decisive asseverations against Christianity were any impediment to us. Mr. Compton was conscious, no doubt, that he had been used to speak in the same manner himself; and he knew also with what little grounds of reason he had done so. Besides, he was probably now shocked in some degree at Mr. Langstone's trenchant, ungentlemanly tone, which would have passed unnoticed before in the midst of their revels, or, perhaps, would have obtained his applause. It was by such violence of assertion and declamation that they formerly upheld one another in their infidel sentiments; and it was not at the gaming-table, or in the company of such as Laura, that they were likely to acquire the softer tones of polished life. Yet he would not go so far as to check him pointedly. In fact, he was struggling between the false shame of being called an apostate from opinions which he had maintained with the same vehemence as Mr. Langstone, and the better conviction which began at length to take hold of his mind. The conflict was not yet finished; but as he had withstood the first brunt of it, the final issue was the less to be feared.

As for Mr. Langstone himself, I could not easily account to my own mind why he remained a moment longer with us, when he saw, that two of the party had no value whatever for his authority; and when he had also some reason to suspect, that even his bosom-friend, Mr. Compton, did not prize it as he had formerly done. It was manifest, that none of us would admit any thing upon his mere *ipse dixit*, or mistake bold calumniations for sound arguments; and that we should try every sentence which he might utter, not by the uncertain rule of his own passions and prejudices, or by the false logic of his school, but by the sure criterion of truth. But it is a rare thing for a man of his stamp to submit to such trammels. Mr. Compton had done it reluctantly; although chastened by affliction, and alarmed by the fear of death, and pressed by his sister, for whom he had a great regard to confer with the parish-priest upon the evidences and doctrines of the Gospel. It might be, that Mr. Langstone considered himself bound to await the termination of a discussion which he alone had provoked; or that he might still entertain the hope to avert by some lucky turn the disgrace which impended over his fraternity, if Mr. Compton should desert them; or, perhaps, his confidence was not a whit abated by the moderate rebukes which he had yet received; or, after all, he might only stay, because he wished for an opportunity of being alone with Mr. Compton, and of sifting him with respect to his future intentions, and the rumoured changes in his mode of life.

Be this as it may, my own line was obvious before me. It was

evidently my business to bear, without shrinking, whatever might arise; to be calm and patient under the reproaches that might be cast upon my profession and office; and not to return any personal disrespect shown to myself. I had now involved myself with Mr. Compton, and appeared to be in the way of obtaining some great advantage, which it would be very impolitic to sacrifice, or put to the hazard, from the want of exercising a certain degree of forbearance towards his friend, or from thinking that conceit, ill-humour, and petulance should be met and resisted with a similar spirit.

These reflections flashed across my mind before I replied to Mr. Harrison's proposition; but they occupied a few moments only, so that the pause was scarcely sensible, and then I said, "You consider the prophecies to be obscure, Mr. Harrison; and Mr. Langstone has pronounced the same opinion in the strongest terms. You have heard, no doubt, of Porphyry." "I have," said Mr. Harrison. "He was an early and inveterate enemy to Christianity." "Yes," added Mr. Langstone, "and he was a man of no mean ability; keen and shrewd, with an eye to pierce through every deceit and disguise. Flourishing too, as he did, in remote antiquity, he saw the beginnings closer at hand, and could, therefore, survey things with more accuracy. His opinion is of the greatest weight. Having thus quietly permitted Mr. Langstone to run himself down by his own impetuosity, I resumed and said, "Very well; Porphyry may be all, and more than you tell me; but, what is to our present purpose, he differed from you *toto cælo* with respect to the prophecies. Instead of thinking them dark, and obscure, and indefinite, on the very contrary, he thought them so clear, and precise in their application, especially those of Daniel, that he courageously maintained, against the utmost possible certainty itself, that they were written subsequently to the events which they pretend to foretel." "And pray, Dr. Warton," interposed Mr. Langstone, "how is it so certain, that they were not written after the events, as Porphyry so ingeniously supposed?"

Here was a happy and admirable specimen of the turnings, and windings, and rapid transitions of a sceptic and free-thinker. In a moment he left his former position, without blushing, to shift for itself, and eagerly caught at something else which held out the shadow of a more favourable issue. However, I met him on his new ground, and told him, without being discomposed, that it was certain; first, because the whole of the Old Testament was known to have been translated into the Greek language, by order of one of the Ptolemies, about two hundred years before the Christian era, which version we now possess under the name of the Septuagint; and, secondly, because the prophecies were always in the custody of the Jews, who, being hostile to Christianity, would never admit any thing to be foisted into them which might favour it. Then I

said, "Observe now how completely Porphyry is at variance with *you*. He brought forward this strangest and most untenable of all charges against the prophecies, in order to get rid at once of the argument from prophecy; and his charge is founded upon their supposed clearness, whereas you affirm that they are so obscure as to be quite unintelligible. But the fact is, that the truth, as is generally the case, lies between the two extremes, namely, that they are not so obscure as to be unintelligible after the events, nor so clear as to be intelligible before them. I do not mean that there will not always be room for dispute in a variety of ways, and, in the case of some particular prophecies, even as to their fulfilment; but I say this, that prophecy accomplishes its object, if it be clear enough beforehand to excite hopes and expectations of fulfilment, and clear enough afterwards to satisfy unprejudiced minds that the fulfilment has really taken place. A certain degree of obscurity, meanwhile, is absolutely necessary beforehand to the accomplishment of this object; for you will not, I presume, contend that it should be manifest at once, upon the delivery of the prophecy, exactly what the event is to be, and precisely when it is to occur, and what are all the instruments to be employed in bringing it about. This you would not expect, nor therefore complain of the want of it. You could only debate about the degree,—and what degree of obscurity should still remain, if any at all should remain, after the fulfilment of the prophecy, may admit of debate also; but, certainly, if no obscurity were to remain, faith would be at an end. We should have perfect demonstration instead of the highest probability; and therefore we should be entirely without any pretence of desert of any sort in believing, or rather we should be like those who have believed because they have seen, and have therefore no promise of any blessing attached to their conduct."

I expected to have been interrupted again and again during this long explanation; but Mr. Langstone had been rather disconcerted, and his keen edge perhaps somewhat blunted, by his having praised Porphyry so warmly, without being aware that his evidence was to be turned against him. However he was silent even when I had finished, and waited, I suppose, for some better opportunity of attacking me. Mr. Harrison, I saw plainly, was prepared to approve and commend, most probably with sincerity, but at all events diplomatically, with a view to the benefit of Mr. Compton; but before he began what he intended to say, Mr. Compton himself replied to me. "Your theory, Dr. Warton," he said, "must needs be allowed to be a probable one. If what are called the prophecies be really prophecies, no doubt there should be such a mixture of clearness and obscurity about them as you mention, in order to effect the purpose for which they must be supposed to be intended. But, in point of fact, is this the case? Can it be satisfactorily made out by history or any well-known circumstances?" "It

can," I answered ; " in consequence of these very prophecies, which, if we were to read cursorily and partially, without any knowledge of the Hebrew language, and without the help of commentators, we might be tempted to pronounce an indigested mass of crudities (setting aside, however, for the present, the astonishing magnificence and sublimity of numerous particular passages ;) in consequence, I repeat it, of these very prophecies, the Jews did actually expect some extraordinary person to appear amongst them; and, what is more, they were in expectation of him about the time when Jesus Christ appeared. This is no *ipse dixit* of mine, invented for the occasion; it is attested by the Scriptures and by profane authors. And this expectation was not confined to the Jews, but extended to other nations, through the medium, no doubt, of the Jewish Scriptures. Tacitus and Suetonius mention the expectation as prevailing throughout the East from ancient times. '*Percrebuit toto Oriente vetus opinio.*' You wish for facts ; what stronger fact can you have than this, that the Jews, on the ground of this expectation, undertook that desperate war against the Romans, which ended in the destruction of their city and temple, and in their own dispersion throughout the world ? For this irrefragable evidence I refer you to the Roman authors whom I have already mentioned, and to the Jew Josephus, not one of whom ever became a Christian. Be the prophecies then as obscure as they may, they were clear enough to raise the expectation which was designed, but not so clear as to prevent the possibility, when the Messiah came, of all cavilling and disputing about his being the person intended by those prophecies. To *me*, indeed, it seems astonishing, that the Jews should ever have doubted about it at all; but the explanation of this fact, relied upon by learned men, cannot but be satisfactory to those who examine it. However, at this distance of time, we possess an advantage in estimating the question which the Jews of the Messiah's time could not have, namely, the establishment of the Christian religion, which proves incontestably that Jesus was the Christ."

" Certainly," said Mr. Harrison, " as the prophecies all along represent the Messiah to be the author of a new covenant founded upon the old one, and as Jesus Christ, claiming to be that Messiah, and accompanied with miraculous powers, promulgated a religion, which, against all human probabilities, soon established itself in the world, and exists in great veneration at this day, and seems to be diffusing itself more and more daily; this is a fact, which is a wonderful evidence of the truth of his pretensions." Here Mr. Langstone, interrupting him, exclaimed sarcastically, " Then Mahomet, most likely, is another Messiah, for he too was the founder of a new religion, which is widely received, and highly venerated by its own votaries ; and, by-the-by, I now remember, that the Jews themselves talk of two Messiahs, a triumphant, and a suffering Mes-

siah; and surely Mahomet may be truly called the triumphant one, for he triumphed by the sword, as well as by arguments, over the religion established by the other, and subdued many nations which supported it. What think you, Dr. Warton, of this impromptu theory of mine?" "I will not condemn it," I said, "because it is an impromptu, although I am in the habit of admiring the slow-grown fruits of meditation more than the hasty births of a random thought; but it is plain that your theory does not accord with Mr. Harrison's conditions, much less with all the conditions which might have been justly proposed. Mahomet was no Jew himself, and never claimed to be the Messiah of the Jews, and set up no pretence to miraculous powers, and propagated a religion which had many human probabilities in its favour, although in its establishment it was still wonderful enough, I allow. Then, as to the two Messiahs, that is a mere invention of the Jews to palliate their infidelity. The triumphant and the suffering Messiah are one and the same person, and never before were such opposite and even contradictory characters united together in so extraordinary a manner. None but a prophet could have conceived any thing like it—at least none who wished to draw a character to agree with nature; and a prophet only could foreknow that a person fulfilling such a character, in all its parts, would hereafter exist. And, on the other hand, this strangeness of the character made it the more difficult, nay, made it impossible, I might say, for an impostor to claim it with success. A man cannot at will both triumph and suffer, as the prophecies portray the fortunes of the Messiah; and accordingly we find, that all but one, who claimed that illustrious title, suffered, indeed, in some sense or other, but never triumphed in any sense. They suffered, I say; for in general they were discomfited and slain; but they did not suffer as the blessed Jesus suffered, and as Isaiah in his 53rd chapter foretold that he would suffer. Without doubt, Mr. Langstone, you have read that memorable chapter, which beyond all the other prophecies had such a surprising effect upon Lord Rochester, and which, I should think, would convince any man who had not resolvedly shut himself up against all conviction, and barred and barricadoed all the avenues by which conviction might gain an entrance into his understanding and affections. Here is a prophecy too which must be granted to be clear enough, after the event; and the more obscure it might be before the event, so much the more wonderful is it, and with so much the more force does it extort conviction from us. For it was obscure only because it spoke of one who was to suffer, not for himself but for others, painfully, ignominiously, and fatally, and yet to rise triumphantly over those sufferings, and to be a prosperous and a glorious conqueror; and to found a peculiar and mighty kingdom, which should endure through all ages. The imagination of the poet, glancing from probable to improbable, from

possible to impossible, had never pictured to itself any thing half so heterogeneous; but the prophet, inspired with a divine spirit, sketched an outline which our crucified Redeemer and Lord fulfilled to a tittle. The study of this converted the Earl of Rochester; let Mr. Langstone study it, and he will be converted too, if he be made of human stuff, however firm that stuff may be."

Being warmed with my subject, I could not sufficiently mark the effect which this speech produced, and an incident prevented me, at that moment from ascertaining it by any thing which they might have been disposed to say in answer to me. My eye, indeed, being fixed upon Mr. Langstone during the latter part of my speech, it did not escape me that he betrayed considerable uneasiness; but, Mrs. Harrison coming in upon the instant, all our attention was immediately directed towards her, and in a few minutes afterwards, as soon as it was decent, Mr. Langstone proposed to go. However, Mr. Compton would not permit it, but said, "Sister, do take the trouble to order up something to eat, for we are all hungry, I dare say with talking; and Langstone with riding and talking too." At once the bell was rung, the directions were given, Mr. Langstone's horses were quietly put up in the stable, and a cold collation was set out by the side of Mr. Compton's sofa. We all now sat down to it, and the debate, fresh as it was, seemed to be entirely forgotten.

Whilst we were eating, nothing of any consequence occurred; but scarcely had we ceased, when Mrs. Harrison, who was anxious, no doubt, as usual about her brother, and curious to know what had passed in conversation between us, and alarmed, perhaps, as to the effect of Mr. Langstone's visit (for she was well acquainted with his character,) addressed her brother thus: "You were all hungry with talking, you said, my dear brother; pray what was the subject upon which you talked so much?—I fear I have lost a great deal of information by my absence." "Perhaps so," he replied; "the subject at least would have pleased you: we were talking about the prophecies—whether they were clear, or, obscure, or what they were; and Dr. Warton has stated to us, very justly, I think, that, upon the supposition of their being genuine, a mixture of clearness and obscurity was essentially necessary." "Yes," I said, "speaking generally, and with respect to one whole large class of the prophecies; for, besides the reasons which I have yet assigned for the expediency, and indeed necessity, of a certain degree of obscurity, the Jews, being under a preparatory dispensation, which was to last till it had performed its object, and till the world was ripe for Christianity, which was to be erected upon its foundations, could not be permitted to see clearly to the end of that dispensation, under which they were still to live for so many ages, and thus, perhaps, to compel the Deity to accomplish his designs by violence, rather than by the natural operations of the free will of

men. But there are other prophecies which needed no previous obscurity; and, in point of fact, they were as clear beforehand as they were afterwards; only that there was a sort of condition annexed to them, and, by the terms in which they were expressed, it seems as if they might be fulfilled, or not, according to circumstances. The prophetic threats of punishment upon the Jews are a splendid instance of this. It depended upon their own conduct whether those threats should be executed or not; but the threats themselves were perfectly clear, and awful has been their accomplishment. Who can resist so irresistible an evidence? When you see a Jew, you see a miracle—a perpetual, standing, daily miracle—to prove the truth of Christianity. For it was the rejection of *Him* who was to resemble Moses, and promulgate a new covenant—and whom they were commanded by Moses to obey, under pain of the most terrible chastisements—it was the rejection and crucifixion of *Him* which was followed, with no tardy step, by those very chastisements themselves. Astonishing, indeed, they might seem beforehand, and very reluctant, no doubt, would the Jews be to admit that God would so utterly cast off his people; but the threatenings have been executed, in their clear plain sense to the very letter, and in every tittle. So, then, such prophecies were clear as might properly be clear, and such were obscure as ought to be obscure; but the event has made them all equally clear, or at least sufficiently clear to those who have eyes, and are willing to see with them. In truth, this is a tremendous consideration—that God will judiciously inflict blindness upon those who are not willing to see, and so suffer them to delude themselves to their own destruction.”

The solemnity with which I delivered this scriptural warning appeared to impose a temporary silence upon them all. Mr. Langstone seemed, besides, to be repressed by the presence of a virtuous woman, and no longer disposed to be flippant or dogmatical. At length Mr. Compton said, that the prophecies deserved, undoubtedly, to be well weighed; and that there was an extraordinary character about them, both of matter and of style. “Nor do I think,” he added, “that their obscurity resembles the obscurity of the heathen oracles, which were often so constructed as to be capable of being accomplished in opposite ways.” “No,” I said “we never meet with any thing like that given to Cræsus—that if he crossed the Halys, he would destroy a great kingdom, which would have been equally fulfilled by defeat or victory. In short, the object was totally different, and they do not admit of comparison in any respect. The fulfilment of an insulated heathen oracle proved only the dexterity of *him* who framed it; but the fulfilment of scripture-prophecy, which is one great connected system, reaching through many ages, and pointing to one vast object, worthy of the divine care and mercy, proves infinite wisdom, and the interference of God himself. It was well said, therefore, that if men

will not believe Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe, though one rise from the dead."

Here Mr. Langstone was tempted to interpose, and he exclaimed rather eagerly, "Let *me* have the latter evidence, however, Dr. Warton: if one rose from the dead, *that* would be an evidence indeed;—the most determined sceptic, a very Academic philosopher, could not argue against it. But it never happens: the stories of such things are the mere fables of superstitious old women, or of men who are like them, too absurd to be credited for an instant. And I must say (this he spoke with an affected gravity,) that it appears to *me* to be rather singular, that an evidence the most convincing of all should be denied to us: this looks very odd, and is quite unaccountable."

There was a malice in this observation, which, I presume, was so ill-concealed as to be visible to all. Without noticing it, however, in an open manner, I said, "Well, Mr. Langstone, but how is this? Do you really mean to assert that no one ever rose from the dead to prove to us the truth of Christianity?" The form of this question occasioned him to hesitate a little before he answered it; but soon, with almost his usual boldness, he replied, "There is no such thing; I have examined all the accounts of apparitions and ghosts, and such trash, not excepting the famous tale of the Cock-lane ghost; and I pronounce them all to be the tricks of impostors, or the dreams of dotards." "But there is one account," I resumed coolly, "which is better authenticated than the rest."—"What is that?" he inquired hastily and incredulously. "Jesus Christ," I answered, "was sent, first from heaven to persuade us; and when that was not sufficient, he was sent to us afterwards from the dead. Here is the very evidence which you prize so highly—unique, and incontrovertible—superior to all the cavilling of an Academic himself. What do you object to this Mr. Langstone.

At first he was somewhat disconcerted, but, after revolving the matter in his thoughts a moment or two, he exclaimed, "No, no, Dr. Warton; that will never do; that is a sort of *petitio principii*. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the supposed facts of the Gospel, and can never be adduced to prove the Gospel itself. No, no; what I require is, the return from the dead of some one whom we know, to assure us that there is an existence after this, and that all which the Gospels tell us about a future state of rewards and punishments is true." "And must this appearance of one from the dead," I inquired, "be vouchsafed to every individual person, or how?" He saw the absurdity into which he was ready to fall; so he replied cautiously, "No, no, not to every single human being; for that would be endless; but to various persons at various times." "Very well," I said, "and how then were the rest of mankind to be convinced? Must they be content with an inferior evidence, or what?" This pressed him hardly, and he was com-

pelled, after much hesitation, to confess, that they must needs take it upon testimony. "If, then, we are reduced," I said, "to such a necessity, that an infinite number of persons must be content with the testimony of witnesses to certain facts, why may we not all of us be satisfied, and once for all, with the testimony of witnesses to the one great fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? Nor is there any *petitio principii* in my way of stating the argument. Jesus, when alive, preached certain doctrines; they to whom he preached would not believe; he came to them again from the dead, to confirm those doctrines by so supernatural a fact. This is what I understand you to insist upon. Now I also, from my pulpit, preach the doctrines of the Gospel; you doubt about their truth, from the alleged insufficiency of the evidence; therefore, I come to you from the dead, to give you what you call the strongest and most irrefragable evidence of their truth; and in that case you profess at least that you would believe; but others, a great many others, must receive the matter on your single authority. I ask, then, whether it would not be better, and therefore wiser, in the Deity, so to ordain it, that we should all of us acquiesce in the original evidence of the fact of Christ's resurrection, rather than that one age or community should trust to the evidence of one Mr. Langstone, and another to another, and succeeding ages or communities to succeeding Mr. Langstones for ever?"

It would have been so glaringly and ridiculously absurd to prefer this latter expedient, as a general mode of proceeding, that even Mr. Langstone would not venture to argue it. A short pause therefore ensued, and I had an opportunity of looking round. A smile was playing upon the countenances of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison; if good manners would have permitted them, or the natural gravity of their own dispositions, they would probably have laughed outright. Mr. Compton, though ill at ease, absolutely did so; and at length exclaimed, "This will not do, Langstone; we cannot maintain it; it has no solid base. Dr. Warton has touched it with his spear, and it crumbles to atoms." "Yes," cried Mr. Langstone, somewhat petulantly, and manifestly vexed, that my authority should be set up above his own, by his quondam partner in profligacy and infidelity, "but the pretended fact of the resurrection of Jesus is so remote—so lost in distant antiquity—who but the most credulous will believe it now? Is not the strength of the testimony of witnesses diminished in proportion to the number of the links in the chain through which it is derived?" "Then," I said, "at a certain period it would amount to nothing. For, being continually lessened, it must at length become less than the least which can be assigned, and which in practice is naught. Thus all our belief of ancient facts would be completely destroyed, and history unavailable to the improvement of mankind. This cannot be; your argument, Mr. Langstone, applies, not to testimony in gene-

ral, but to oral tradition in particular. *That*, indeed, is weakened, as you say, every day; and the facts only so reported are very soon utterly forgotten. But written memorials stand upon a different footing, and if their authority was good at first, it is good for ever afterwards; and perhaps increased, instead of diminished, by the lapse of time, in consequence of a thousand circumstances which may arise collaterally to strengthen it. But the original authority will be better and better, in proportion as they who record the facts were nearer and nearer to the occurrence of the facts themselves, and had superior means of information. By this canon, therefore, the authority of the four Gospels can scarcely be exceeded in weight. Matthew and John were absolutely eye-witnesses. Mark was probably the same; but at all events he was the constant companion of one who certainly was. And Luke shall speak for himself." Then suddenly rising from my seat at the table, I seized a Bible, which I had espied with pleasure, upon my first entrance, lying upon a small table in a corner of the room, and returning with equal speed, and opening it at St. Luke's Gospel, I read aloud the four introductory verses, and immediately afterwards resumed the argument.

"You observe, I said, "what St. Luke asserts—namely, that he had a perfect understanding of all things from the first. Upon the whole, therefore, the testimony of these four Evangelists is the very best that can possibly be had; and it is confirmed in every way by every thing else which bears upon it; it stands unimpeached and unimpeachable. Your sceptics and free-thinkers, indeed, may set it aside at once, and without examination, by a single *ipse dixit*, or stroke of the pen; but it must be allowed, I trow, that their authority, under such circumstances, is less than nothing—on the negative side of the line of zero; much less to be put into the balance against the mighty, overwhelming authority of men of all ages, prodigious in talent, in learning, in virtue—the splendid luminaries of their respective generations—men, too, who probed this very testimony to the bottom, were satisfied with it, and fastened their faith and hopes upon it. In comparison with this, the other kicks the beam."

Mr. Langstone and Mr. Compton not seeming disposed to say any thing in answer to me, Mr. Harrison, to carry on the discussion, inquired whether it was clearly made out by the learned, that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were really the authors of the Gospels ascribed to them; and whether those Gospels had come down to us in a pure, unadulterated form. "It happens," he said, "that I have not examined this question for myself, but have hitherto taken it upon trust; I should like to know, therefore, something more positive about it; and it is of importance in the present stage of our debate." "Yes, certainly," cried Mr. Langstone, eager to second any thing which implied a doubt about the founda-

tions of Christianity; "unless this can be made out to our perfect satisfaction, the resurrection, and every other fact, fall to the ground at once. How is this, Dr. Warton? There are plenty of gospels, besides these four, which you are pleased to call forgeries: but wherefore? Why may not these be the forgeries, and those others genuine? Or rather, are they not all forgeries? There are enough, I believe, of absurdities, and inconsistencies, and contradictions in them all to overturn them all. Pray explain this, Dr. Warton?"

Thus he ran on with somewhat of his former flippancy; and thus I answered him, subduing my indignation as well as I could, and endeavouring to preserve the superiority of calmness over intemperance, but with a little mixture of *badinage*, and of gentle whipping, now and then, to keep him in awe, and to frighten him into good manners: "Fie, fie, Mr. Langstone," I said; "why set me to do a thing for you, which you may do so easily for yourself, any fine morning that you will? There is Lardner, for instance; he wrote upon this subject in about a dozen paltry octavo volumes; and what are they to your free-thinker, who is always indefatigable in his investigations, and cannot sleep, unless he has dived to the very bottom of things, and solved every difficulty? Besides, these octavos are so charming, that you will wish them to be folios; or perhaps they will tempt you, for the sake of becoming a perfect master of this question, to betake yourself to the real folios themselves—a hundred or more, I warrant you; the old Fathers, I mean, without whose help you must be content, after all, to go upon trust or to grope in the dark. Well, all these have been conned over, again and again, by men skilful in the ancient languages, beginning their researches with the apostolic ages, and carrying them down through several of the early centuries; and thus after the most laborious industry, and the maturest deliberation, and the most scrutinising criticism, and an illustrious display of all the powers and resources of the most gigantic learning, was the canon of Scripture settled. But Mr. Langstone will unsettle it at once, and without any trouble, by a mere quære—may not the four Gospels be forgeries? I will ask *you* Mr. Harrison, can any thing more be done that has not been done towards the complete disposing of this question?"

"It seems impossible," answered Mr. Harrison. "Every production of antiquity bearing upon these Gospels has, you say, been thoroughly sifted." "It has," I rejoined, "and many more than now exist." "Any man, then," he said, "who should attempt to go through the inquiry again, would have smaller means of settling the question." "Yes," I replied, "smaller, certainly, but amply sufficient to satisfy the most scrupulous mind, and to occupy the longest life." "And the epitome of the whole investigation is to be found in Lardner; is it not?" he inquired. "It

is," I said. "Then I will look into him," he continued, "just to acquaint myself with the mode of the investigation." "You will do well," I said; "but almost any of the books, much shorter ones, upon the canon of Scripture, would, I think, serve your purpose, although, in saying this, I would not be supposed to discourage larger inquiries. And as to the other point which you started, the purity of Scripture; it need only be mentioned, to satisfy any ingenuous person, that since the invention of printing, the wilful corruption of the text has been impossible; and that before, the power of comparing manuscripts with each other, and with the translations of them into different languages, and the vigilant, mutual watch of contending sects, made it extremely difficult to alter or interpolate any thing without immediate detection. In short, every thing of that sort, which was either attempted or accomplished, and every variety of reading, which has ever existed in any manuscript, are perfectly well known to the critics, and actually appear, for the general inspection, in the great and elaborate editions of the Scriptures. What more, then, can you now at this day expect, or could you ever have?"

"Nothing, certainly," replied Mr. Harrison; "and I must say for myself, with the most unfeigned pleasure, that I am entirely at ease upon the subject. I thank you, Dr. Warton, a thousand times." "Very well, then," I said; "if these collateral questions are thought to be sufficiently settled, we come back to the original one with the more decided certainty; and we cannot but acknowledge, not only that the fact of Christ's resurrection, attested by such witnesses as we have described, is a more forcible and convincing evidence of the truth of Christianity, than the appearance of one from the dead to different persons at different times, but also than such an appearance to every individual of every time." "*That* is a strong assertion, indeed, Dr. Warton," said Mr. Compton; "I was disposed to go with you before, but I cannot now. So far I am well aware, that the appearance of one from the dead to every individual is by no means to be expected as a general system. As Longstone very truly said, it would be endless. I am aware, also, from what has passed between us in conversation, that it may not suit the purposes of the Deity to afford us all universally the best evidence which may be possible; but that he may wish to try our tempers and dispositions, whether we will believe upon sufficient evidence; upon the same evidence that we believe other facts of importance to us. One thing more I willingly concede, that the humour or caprice of particular persons is not to be indulged, as a matter of course, with that evidence, which may either really be, or which they themselves may choose to call, the strongest. But, then, I should still think with Longstone, that the appearance of one from the dead, theoretically speaking, is such an evidence as it would be impossible to contro-

vert ; and, although you see that I do not go his length in pronouncing it *singular* and *odd*, that this especial evidence is denied us, yet I cannot but regret the total want of it in every case, and upon every occasion whatever. These are my sentiments, Dr. Warton, which, I hope, I have made intelligible ; but I will not shut my ears against conviction."

I could with difficulty restrain my joy, when I heard this speech. It delighted me in every way. It was full of candour, and visibly bespoke a surprising change of opinion and feeling. But what pleased me most was the desire, which I thought I saw in it, of carrying Mr. Langstone with him through all the consequences which might ensue to himself. There was an evident management in what he said, with a view to his friend, of some sort or other. I interpreted it in the view which I have mentioned, and hailed it as the harbinger of certain good. At the same time he had mistaken my position. I had contrasted the general evidence of Christ's resurrection with a general system of appearances from the dead ; but he contrasted it with particular appearances to particular persons, now and then, upon extraordinary occasions, and, as it seemed, for their own conviction alone. In my way of putting it, it struck me then, that a general system of appearances to every individual of every time would come to nothing, and be a waste of miraculous interferences ; and I think the same now. But *his* position was exceedingly plausible and well worthy of consideration ; and it seemed besides to be of great consequence to me to overthrow it, if I could. I knew, upon the whole, that it was wrong ; but I by no means knew whether I should be able to prove it to be so to his satisfaction. Were this done, the result might be, not only that he would look solely, and as a matter of necessity, to those great universal evidences which God has provided for the whole race of mankind, but, also, that he would abandon altogether the vain notion, which he now entertained, of the certainty or even probability that a particular appearance would be useful to himself.

" Well, then," I said, after a short pause, and without taking any notice of the variation which he had introduced, " We will see about it. But it will be of no avail to argue it as a naked, abstract, theoretical question, whether this or that evidence is the strongest. We will take it up practically, and as Scripture puts it: ' If they believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe, although one rose from the dead.' It is supposed, therefore, that all the other evidence has been already examined, and rejected as insufficient; and the question is, whether the same persons, who have done this, are likely to be convinced by the apparition of one sent to them from the grave. Our Lord said they were not ; at least he has so represented it in his most interesting and instructive parable of Dives and Lazarus."

“Yes,” exclaimed Mr. Langstone with vehemence, and interrupting me; “but his own history, which you call authentic, is against him. For it is there stated, that one of his own disciples, who had seen all his miracles, and had been told beforehand, that after death he would rise again; and was now told, that he was actually risen, and that he had appeared to those very persons who mentioned the fact to him; could not, however, be prevailed upon to yield to any testimony, or to any evidence but to that of his own eyes; and the story goes on to say, that this evidence was given to him, and that he believed in consequence of it. This, I think, is what you have already alluded to, Dr. Warton; and you insinuated that the case of this doubting disciple, who afterwards believed, because he saw, was a case without merit; so I suppose, the greater a man’s credulity, the more orthodox and the more meritorious his faith. But without stopping to show the absurdity of this, or to remark upon the inconsistencies of your Scriptures; what I quote the story for is, by way of an *argumentum ad hominem* to yourself, Dr. Warton. You, at least, must allow, that here was a man, whom nothing else convinced, convinced by an apparition; and why should you pronounce the same thing improbable now? I protest, I do not see how I could resist that evidence myself. But there is no danger of such a trial. What is there to re-appear? The bodies of the dead crumble into dust, as we all know; and the spirits, which animated them, vanishing together, will never again disturb others, nor be disturbed themselves.

Illis dura quies oculos, et ferreus urget
Somnus; in æternam clauduntur lumina noctem.”

These two fine lines of his Epicurean Virgil he pronounced with an astonishing declamatory energy, and they were both preceded and followed by a malicious Sardonic smile. I admired the poetry before, whilst I deprecated and detested the thought; but now the verses themselves, thus cited and thus applied, grated with an odious sound upon my ears. I was startled, too, at so bold an avowal of so base an opinion, and I paused to recover myself; and such, I silently thought, in his own phrase, such is Langstone well, but what will be Langstone sick. Such is the courageous Langstone; will not he too be timorous when he stands on the verge of the two worlds?

Mrs. Harrison, I perceived, was deeply shocked, and she seemed to be doubting within herself whether she should fly, as from a pestilence, or remain and risk the danger of another similar effusion of impious materialism. If she had gone, she would undoubtedly have left us all in an “admired confusion,” and she wished most probably to hear out the debate, trusting to *me* that I should preserve the superiority in it, and that the conceit and arrogance of

this audacious sceptic would yet be humbled. She knew, unquestionably, that men existed who, by the adoption of such ignoble opinions, voluntarily degraded themselves to a level with the brutes ; she suspected that her brother was once such a man ; but her ears had never before been wounded with an open declaration that such a man stood confessed in her presence ; and she thought too, perhaps, that her own presence, and the presence of a clergyman, ought to have restrained him. However she remained ; but, after a single glance of disapprobation and disdain, she studiously averted her eyes, during the rest of the conversation, from an object so painful and disgusting to her.

To Mr. Harrison, as far as I could conjecture, what had happened was but little surprising, and to Mr. Compton not at all. On the contrary, the wonder of Mr. Compton must have been that Mr. Langstone had not proceeded throughout in the same strain of violence with which he began ; and when that was not the case, he had been disposed, I thought, to interpret the subdued tone of his friend as a real relaxation of his hostility to the Gospel ; but he was now, I presume, sufficiently undeceived, and so, if possible, to prevent further mischief, and to keep up the decencies of life as well as he could, he cried out with uneasiness, " Come, come, Langstone, you are encumbering the question before us with other matter ; I want to hear what Dr. Warton will say upon that question.—Never fear, he will be ready for you on any ground that you may choose when the proper time arrives ; but the present question was raised by yourself, Langstone, and therefore you should not disturb the discussion of it by the introduction of other subjects." " Oh ! by no means," replied Mr. Langstone, " I had no such intention. Let Dr. Warton try his strength. I will listen to him patiently."

" Well, then, Mr. Langstone," I said, " as you ended with a quotation from Virgil, I will begin with one :

*Sunt geminæ Somni portæ; quarum altera fertur
Cornea; quâ veris facilis datur exitus Umbris:
Altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto;
Sed falsa ad cœlum mittunt insomnia Manes.*

And I ask you this first ; how will you know whether your supposed apparition of a dead man from the other world comes to you through the gate of ivory or the gate of horn ? How will you know whether it be a true ghost, or the mere empty illusion of a dream ?" " Oh ! pardon me, Dr. Warton," he replied hastily, " I have nothing to do with dreams. To be influenced by dreams is the very height of folly and weakness ; that is not my failing. I must be wide awake, or the ghost will do nothing with *me*." " So you shall then," I said ; " but many men dream, do they not, even when awake ?" " Why, that is true enough," he an-

swered sarcastically; "the dreams of waking superstition are endless, and most absurd." "Be it so," I said. "It is not unlikely that you are acquainted, as I am, with persons who affirm, without the slightest doubt upon the subject in their own minds, and apparently beyond the possibility of being convinced to the contrary, that they have seen with their open eyes the strangest visions imaginable, which you know immediately by internal evidence to be false." "I have certainly met with more than one person of that description in the course of my life," he replied. "But I presume you did not believe their stories," I said. "No, indeed," he answered; "I laughed at their absurdity and nonsense." "Should you have expected them to believe *you*," I asked, "if you had related similar stories of yourself to *them*?" "Nor that either," he replied, "unless they were infatuated." "Well, then," I asked again, "and would you not try to account for the mistakes of those deluded people, by saying, that they must certainly have been dreaming in their sleep, although they thought themselves wide awake? Or, if they were really awake, yet that their fancies were still but a dream? Their agitated minds, perhaps, were dwelling perpetually upon some peculiar notions, until they embodied them into shapes, which danced before their eyes with all the semblance of realities. Would you not explain the matter in one or other of these ways?" He granted that he should. "And all sober-minded persons," I said, "would explain in the same way, would they not, any similar supernatural visions, which you might tell them had occurred to yourself?" He allowed it. "Very well, then," I said, "this being universally the case, however we might at first have been convinced of the reality of these visions, and obstinately bent upon believing them, should we not at length begin to distrust ourselves? One man laughs and ridicules us, another argues and disputes with us, a third accounts ingeniously for our delusions. Can we stand out against all this for ever? Will not our own belief be gradually weakened, and at last extinguished?" "It seems likely enough," he answered, "speaking generally; but if I were the person, as I am pretty confident that I shall always be master of my own senses, I think I could distinguish sufficiently by the circumstances whether the vision were a true one or not; a ghost, suppose, or only a phantom of the brain." "A ghost would probably speak to you, would it not?" I inquired. "I presume so," he replied; "for, if it had any rational object, the object must be explained by words." "Undoubtedly," I said, "and the words spoken might be an excellent clue to direct you in forming your judgment about the ghost itself, whether it were a true or a false apparition, whether it came from God or from the devil; might they not?" "Possibly they might," he answered. "You being always in possession of your sober senses," I said, "if the ghost were to utter something amazingly nonsensical,

would you not pronounce at once that it was a false ghost, although you might be broad awake?" "I would certainly," he replied, laughing. "And," I said, "if it ordered you to do something which would drive you out of society, and disgrace your name for ever, would you not pronounce it to be a false ghost; or, if it were a real one, that it came from the Father of lies and all mischief?" "If there were any such being," he answered dubiously, "I might perhaps say so." "Well," I continued, "and suppose the ghost, resembling a dead person of your acquaintance who disbelieved the immortality of the soul, should address you in this manner, 'Mr. Langstone.' He comes upon a grave errand, and therefore we must make him speak with a correspondent becoming gravity; 'Mr. Langstone.' Probably, indeed, to rivet your attention to him, he will repeat your name three times, in the true ghostlike style, and with a hollow sepulchral tone, 'Mr. Langstone,—Mr. Langstone,—Mr. Langstone.'"

Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, with all their sense of dignity and good manners, could hardly restrain a laugh. Mr. Compton, without any scruple, laughed aloud. Mr. Langstone himself bit his lips for vexation. It was quite a novelty to him to be the object of raillery; being, like *Æsop*, *derisor aliorum, non ipse deridendus*. So he jumped up from his chair, and exclaimed angrily that he would be gone, if we wished to do any thing else but to argue. "Nay, nay," said Mr. Compton: pacifying him; "this is Dr. Warton's good-humoured, facetious way of putting his supposition; you have had your own jokes, without any obstruction whatever; and therefore you are bound by the law of reciprocity, not to spoil his wit by interrupting him. No, no, Langstone; sit down again; I am all impatience to hear the ghost's speech."

This did not much mend the matter, however, he resumed his seat; because, I believe, he would have found it a very awkward thing to walk across the room to the door, with the laugh against him. "Well, then," I began again, "if Mr. Langstone does not admire this solemn exordium, perhaps he would as little admire the body of the speech, and still less the peroration; so I will put it all in one word. The ghost comes to assure you, Mr. Langstone, that you have an immortal soul." "Does he indeed?" exclaimed Mr. Langstone irritated, and starting up once more; "then I will not believe him." He uttered this in a most determined tone, but sat down again.

"I thought so," I said quietly; "but pray tell me, were there not persons, before the Christian æra, who reasoned themselves into a belief of the immortality of the soul?" He could not deny it. "And is not the immortality of the soul," I asked again. "one of the doctrines of Christianity?" It was impossible for him to say otherwise. "And which is most easy to believe," I asked thirdly, "the whole of Christianity, or this one doctrine which is

a part of it?" This question he refused to answer, and, crying out petulently that he was wearied with answering question after question to no purpose, he desired me to answer it myself according to my own pleasure. "I will then," I said, "and the obvious answer is, that it is easier to believe a part than the whole, which necessarily embraces the part and other things. And now we may draw the conclusion from these premises, which is equally obvious, namely, that Mr. Langstone would not believe in the Christian religion, although one rose from the dead."

Upon this, not being able to endure his unpleasant situation any longer, he got up in good earnest, and, as he took leave of Mr. Compton and the rest of us, he endeavoured to conceal his chagrin with a laugh, and said, "Very well; as Dr. Warton has now settled the matter to his satisfaction, I may be excused; so good morning to you all." This he accompanied with a very low, affected bow. Mr. Compton called out that he should wait till his horses were ready, and at the same time desired his sister to ring the bell.—This she did, but Mr. Langstone was gone, and no sooner was the door shut after him than she exclaimed, "Oh! my dear brother, I am so glad that he has left us! I can now breathe again with freedom; but I shall abominate that chair (pointing to the chair on which Mr. Langstone had sat) as long as I can distinguish it from the rest." "Yes," said Mr. Harrison, "and with all his positive dictatorial temper, and with all his fluency and impetuosity of speech, he is so shallow too. He really never seems to me to penetrate beneath the surface, or to see to the end of any thing, so that it is no wonder that he is entangled and confuted immediately." Then thinking, perhaps, that what he had said was not complimentary to *me*, he added, instantly, "At the same time, Dr. Warton, I am fully aware, and acknowledge with gratitude, the admirable manner in which you conducted the whole conversation. Indeed, if it might not look like flattery, I should express in very strong terms my great surprise at the readiness and facility with which you meet and overthrow every position adverse to Christianity." "It is very true," interposed Mr. Compton; "you put me in mind, Dr. Warton, of the ingenious description of the Dialectic and the Rhetoric, and I perceive that you can contend in the manner of both. Your short, pithy, pungent, home-thrust questions are the hand with the fingers closed—the fist, as we call it; and your lengthened disputations, whether in attack or defence, whether to explain or to illustrate, are the hand with all its fingers expanded and apart."

I was by no means displeased with these commendations, although not entitled to so large a measure. If their opinion of me had been but a low one, I should scarcely have been able to effect any thing important, especially with such a man as Mr. Compton, with whom authority went a great way. I thought it right, how-

ever, to put the matter on its true footing; so I said, "Oh! spare me, gentlemen! There is nothing at all really surprising in what I do. If you recollect that these are the subjects upon which I am constantly reading, and thinking, and talking, and writing, and preaching, all your wonder will cease in a moment. But to have done with this, I wish to know, with regard to the last point that we were upon when Mr. Langstone deserted us, whether you still think that any thing would be gained by appearances from the dead?" "I am not quite satisfied about it," he answered. "The argument terminated too abruptly for me." "So far I presume you see," I said, "that there would be a difficulty in deciding whether it were a true appearance or an illusion, and if a true one, whether it came for a good or for a bad purpose. Then it must be supposed, (indeed we assume it,) that if it were a true one, and came for a good purpose, it would be to persuade us of something against which we were so strongly prejudiced as to have rejected the suitable evidence of it. Immediately, therefore, I have no doubt, we should be up in arms against the poor ghost; we should be disposed to pronounce the whole thing a fancy of the brain, or perhaps the pious fraud of some officious friend to cheat us into Christianity, or a change of life, or what not? Let it be granted, however, that, in spite of all such endeavours to escape from the impression of the reality of the ghost, the impression will still cling to us and haunt us, and we consult, in our distress, such a man as Mr. Langstone, a man of the same principles, pursuits, and prejudices as ourselves. Oh! what a battery would be opened upon us of argument and raillery! What laughs, what jokes, what jeers, what sarcasms, would not be launched against us! What appeals would not be made to our consistency, to our courage, to our pride! In short he must be an extraordinary man, I think, who should obey the ghost against his own inclinations, and in despite of all the ridicule that would be heaped upon him. You remember, no doubt, the story of Lord Lyttleton's ghost, and the attempt to divert his mind from the thoughts of the death that was foreboded, by putting the clock forward to the fatal hour. It struck; and, at once released from all his fears, he exclaimed in a transport of joy, 'I have cheated the ghost!' This illustrates what has been said; and, upon the whole, it appears to me that a maxim, which we might well have admitted on our Lord's authority alone, is now sufficiently proved by reason and by fact; namely, that they who do not believe Moses and the prophets will not believe although one rose from the dead."

"In truth it seems so," said Mr. Compton, "and, therefore, we will finish the discussion here. I am sure we have detained you unmercifully, Dr. Warton. I expected to have talked upon other subjects; but Langstone led us to the prophecies, and then to this idle speculation about ghosts. However, it has been useful to

me, very useful." "I am glad of it," I said, as I got up to go, "and we shall have time, I hope, for the other subjects, with God's leave." "I hope so," he replied, and reached out his hand, which having pressed, I left him.

§ 3.—MR. COMPTON, MR. AND MRS. HARRISON.

AFTER this long conversation, a week elapsed before I saw Mr. Compton again. Mr. Harrison was with me, on the following day, to report the satisfactory progress which appeared to have been made, and to entreat me to pursue my own good work, whenever I could spare time for it from my other employments. I was as willing to do this as he could possibly wish, and I was particularly encouraged to proceed by a circumstance which he mentioned to me. Mr. Compton, it seems, had written to Mr. Langstone, without the least delay, and whilst the subject was fresh in his mind, in such a manner and in such terms as to prove, at least, his own sincerity, whatever effect might be produced upon his friend. This letter Mr. Compton had shown to his sister, and she was highly delighted with it. Amongst other things it reminded Mr. Langstone with what facility all the opinions which he had advanced had been overthrown; and it took occasion from thence to insinuate the probability, that every other opinion of his, inimical to the Christian religion, might be overthrown with equal facility. For, in fact, these opinions had been taken up on bad authority, as Mr. Compton too well knew by his own sad experience; and, therefore, he exhorted his friend to substitute, as he himself was about to do, for Bolingbroke, and Voltaire, and Hume, and Gibbon, the writers of a better school.

Well, I arranged with Mr. Harrison to be at Mr. Compton's the next day; but before the appointed hour arrived, I was stopped by a message, which informed me that Mr. Compton had been seized during the night with another attack of paralysis; from which, however, it was thought by the medical men, that he would certainly recover, and it was therefore recommended to me to await the result. I did so, and, at length, after the interval which I have already mentioned, the disease having abated, and Mr. Compton himself having expressed a great desire to see me, I lost no time in going to him. I expected to find a great alteration in him in every way. This second seizure by the same disorder would convince him, I supposed, that he could not be much longer an inhabitant of this world; and that it was necessary for him, therefore, to set se-

riously to work to prepare himself for the next. At all events, I was now determined to let him know the worst.

I was received by Mr. Harrison, who conducted me immediately upstairs, and tapped gently at Mr. Compton's door. Mrs. Harrison was within; and I understood that this was a concerted signal for her to dismiss the attendants by another door, and to admit *me* alone. However, I found nobody in the room but herself and the sick man.

He was sitting in his bed, supported by pillows, so as to be nearly upright. With his right hand, the only one not paralysed, he held up a pocket-handkerchief to the left side of his face, to conceal, as I thought, the distortion of it. Fortunately, I was prepared beforehand to expect to see some derangement of his natural features, which is always an affecting spectacle; but he was probably not aware that I knew of it, and so tried to hide it: yet he might be sure that it would not escape my observation, if I continued with him many minutes. Ah! I said to myself, he still clings to the world, and to outward appearances, and is not sensible of their vanity.

As I approached the bed, his lips quivered, and tears started from his eyes, and all that I saw of his countenance betrayed great agitation and uneasiness of mind. It was pale, as from loss of appetite, unquiet rest, and mental trouble. His sister wept in silence. My sympathy was awakened, but I could do nothing to console him. I could not grasp his hand without disturbing and perhaps distressing him; to speak was not at present within my power. After the first piteous glance, however, when he ceased to look at me, I became gradually re-assured, and, at length, began the conversation in the following manner:—

“I am sorry, Sir, very sorry, to see in so much affliction.” “I knew you would,” he said immediately, interrupting me, and expressing himself with tolerable firmness, and without any, hesitation or indistinctness of speech, which I was glad to observe. “Yes,” I resumed, “it is a painful thing to see any person in pain and distress. We cannot conquer that feeling at once; no, nor at all. Perhaps it does us honour. Yet the slightest reflection teaches us, that these evils of sickness and calamity are calculated and intended to produce good. As I walked towards your house, I watched some large dark black clouds, which were suspended in the air over my head, and threatened every moment a tempestuous downfall. On a sudden the sun, which was behind one of them shot his beams obliquely on the rest, and immediately all their skirts and edges were lit up with a golden light. The thought struck me in an instant, that this was applicable to your case, Mr. Compton. Your sufferings have been long and great, after an uninterrupted enjoyment of health and worldly prosperity. The cloud that still hangs over you is large, and dark, and black

enough." "It is indeed," he said. "Yes I resumed again; "but it is bordered by a robe of glorious light; nay, the light breaks through it in every direction. The design, and the use of your calamities are as manifest as the calamities themselves, and the mercy of God shines out in the midst of them with a visible lustre. What were you, I ask, six months ago? What are you, I ask, now? You have yourself, indeed, already told me what your former life has been, and how conscious you were that it was totally at variance with revelation. But it was contrary to reason too, the only remaining guide. At least it could not be the proper life of a man destined to immortality; *that* is as clear as the sun at noon-day. No; and I will go further; it could not be the proper life of a man doomed to terminate his existence in this world. They, who would shamelessly maintain such a position, are but little removed from the brute beast. In fact they put themselves voluntarily upon a level with him, and so they say, as he might, if he were endued with speech, 'Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die,' and our existence is at an end for ever. What! Is this the language and the sentiment of a *man*? Of a being, whether immortal or not, yet gifted with the highest powers of reason and imagination; capable certainly of the greatest actions, and the noblest aspirations? No, no; a rational creature must acknowledge that he ought to be governed by reason in all circumstances alike, whether death terminate his whole existence or not. Such a life, therefore, as is led by loose men of the world cannot be justified upon any supposition."

Thus I was running on, and seemed almost to have forgotten my main point; but here the sick man himself exclaimed with earnestness, and dropped his hand from his face. "It is too true, Sir, I see it now, and I wonder it so long escaped me. But what am I at this moment, that I should feel more comfortable with myself?" "You are come to yourself," I said, "which is a mighty change. This sickness, ordained in mercy, snapped your mistaken habits and your erroneous career asunder. It compelled you to reflect: it brought home to you the conviction, that your life hung upon a thread, at the will of another; it forced upon you the thought of a hereafter into which you might be plunged in a single instant, unawares and unprepared; you looked round for support against this tremendous idea; you remodelled your family, upon virtuous principles; you came to God's house of prayer; you searched the holy Scriptures; you inquired into the evidences of Christianity. Am I not right in calling this a mighty change? Six months ago did this seem possible? Could it have happened without adversity? If God himself had not touched the hard rock, these waters of sorrow would never have flowed: he deserves your love, therefore, for he has first loved *you*; and this correction is the proof of his love."

“Would that it might be so,” he said; “but, without doubt, if there be a God, he is necessarily endued with all perfection; and in whatever he does he will seek the glory of his own nature, and not the gratification of any temporary passion. Nor will he ever exercise one attribute to the exclusion of another; except, perhaps, justice, when he has tried mercy in vain. And this is the thought which still alarms me, lest, in my own case, he has inflicted these calamities upon me judicially, and with no view to any further mercy.” “The great scene of God’s justice,” I replied, “will be the next world. In this world, whilst we continue in it, our trial and probation will also continue; and, consequently, until the very moment of our departure from it, we are capable of amendment. I speak generally; I do not mean to assert that God never inflicts punishment judicially in this world. On the contrary, we sometimes see men struck down in the midst of their vices, without any possibility of profiting by the blow. *That*, perhaps, may be called a judicial punishment; but I myself believe, that even such persons are snatched away in mercy; in mercy to others, that so signal an interference of providence may operate as a warning; and in mercy to themselves, because God foresees, that, if their lives were prolonged, they would abuse the indulgence, and pluck down upon themselves a heavier damnation.”

He shuddered at the word with which I concluded my sentence: but, before I could proceed, he inquired despondingly, whether it were not probable, both from reason and Scripture, that God had appointed a term, or limit, beyond which all the avenues to mercy are closed against us. “Is not God himself,” he said, “represented, in one of the Psalms, as swearing in his wrath, that certain men shall never enter into his rest?” “He is,” I answered. “The denunciation is addressed to the Jews in the wilderness, and regards the temporal possession of the promised land of Canaan. It has nothing to do with their final salvation; although, indeed, it might reasonably be feared, that the same crimes which rendered them unworthy of a temporal rest in Canaan, might render them unworthy also of an eternal rest in heaven. But then there is this hope on the other hand, that so striking a punishment as that of shutting them up in a barren desert, till they were all cut off by death, might have filled many of them with deep contrition and remorse, and so they might have done what they could, and the best which they knew, individually, if not nationally, to reconcile themselves to their offended God. This, however, could not reverse the temporal sentence; but it might affect the final one. St. Paul undoubtedly applies this text to all Christians; and, therefore, in their case, rest can only mean the eternal rest in heaven, which is prepared for the righteous. And how does the apostle intend to admonish us? Why, that as God excluded the Jews from Canaan on account of their sins, so will he also exclude unrighteous Chris-

tians from heaven, of which Canaan was the type. This being the case, therefore, and life being uncertain, he further admonishes us to cast out betimes the evil heart of unbelief, and not to prolong the day of our repentance, but to seize upon the present moment, which alone is in our own power: and it is implied that the present moment is always in our power. We know nothing therefore of any period of God's mercy, or of any condition of sinners, after which he will no longer strive with them, but withdraw his Holy Spirit altogether. If there be such a period and such a condition, yet he has no where revealed them, and therefore it is impossible for us, and foolish, to conjecture about them. But one thing is certain, that they, from whom the spirit is withdrawn, will plunge deeper and deeper into sin, if they are permitted to live. Every thought of theirs will be evil continually. You may use this test, therefore, for yourself; and you may derive from it the mighty comfort of being assured, that, if there be any such fatal limit, *you* have not yet passed it; on the contrary that you have receded from it. So wonderful has been the divine goodness towards you, that you have been able to retrace some of your steps; and, I doubt not, the same goodness is now waiting upon you to be still further gracious. You have reason for hope, but none for despair!"

"Ah!" said the sick man mournfully; "but may not my case be like the case of Esau, who found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears? Such, I think, are the words of St. Paul. I met with them this very morning, and they have made a painful impression upon my spirits." Upon saying this he wept aloud, as Esau had done, and his sister withdrew from the bed-side to hide her grief. "You have mistaken this text," I replied immediately, to re-assure them both; "you have mistaken it entirely. I will explain it presently." Then I followed Mrs. Harrison to the window, and recommended to her to retire into the adjoining room to compose herself. She was aware, I believe, that I might have some particular wish for her absence, and so she obeyed at once, telling me that, if I wanted her, she should be within the hearing of my voice.

This being arranged, I returned to my post, and sat down on a chair, close by the side of the sick-bed. In a moment Mr. Compton exclaimed, "Oh! what an excellent woman is my sister, Dr. Warton! How kind and tender-hearted! When I think of her as a wife, too, I see and deplore my own loss. The great error of my life strikes me the more forcibly, and under my present circumstances adds a poignancy to my feelings which is acute and piercing indeed. Ah! Dr. Warton, I too might have had such a wife perhaps to watch over me with affectionate care and anxiety in my distress; and children to surround my bed, and lament their father. Oh! what folly, what madness—it touches me now, it sinks

to my very heart! You do not know enough of my case, Dr. Warton, to see the astonishing folly and madness of it."

Here his sobs interrupted him, and he did indeed exemplify the history of Esau. No tears or sobs could now recover the blessing which he had sacrificed for the sake of a present indulgence. It was gone, irreparably, for ever! I pitied him; but still, as I doubted whether he had any conception of the guilt as well as of the folly and madness of the sin to which he had alluded, I thought it would be unseasonable to attempt as yet to sooth his sorrow; so, remembering those beautiful lines of Milton upon wedded love and indiscriminate sensuality, I repeated them to him, and afterwards some others, which are put into the angel's mouth to reprove Adam for the undue and passionate expressions which he used in speaking of his connubial happiness. It occurred to me that I might thus, perhaps, gradually prepare him for another and a more essential view of his condition.

"You have admired, no doubt, before," I said, "but now you feel to your very inmost sense, my good Sir, what the divine poet says:

"Hail, wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human off-spring—
By thee adulterous lust was driven from men
Among the bestial herds to range; by thee,
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother first were known.
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets,
Whose bed is undefiled—
Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,
Reigns here and revels; not in the bought smile
Of harlots, loveless, joyless, unendear'd,
Casual fruition————"

"Yes, yes," cried out the sick man, "I see now my error and calamity, and my degradation too. It is true enough, promiscuous lusts befits only the bestial herds. It is impure, irrational, unjust, and faithless. Guilt and shame only are its offspring. The delight is momentary and vanishes." "Yes," I said, "it vanishes, but it leaves a sting behind—

————— *Medio de fonte leporum*
Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat.

Hear Milton again, what he said to Adam about this delight:

————— Think the same vouchsaf'd
To cattle and each beast; which would not be
To them made common and divulg'd, if aught
Therein enjoyed were worthy to subdue
The soul of man, or passion in him move.

In loving thou dost well, in passion not,
Wherein true love consists not; love refines
The thoughts, and heart enlarges; hath his seat
In reason;—is the scale
By which to heav'nly love thou may'st ascend,
Not sunk in carnal pleasure."

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed, "I despise myself now thoroughly; it is base, and below a man. This is my deliberate judgment, Dr. Warton, not, as you might think, the constrained profession of one cut off for ever from every enjoyment. My misery, indeed, has brought me first to the knowledge of it, but thanks to my misery for disclosing this knowledge to me, and for leading me to view my conduct in its true light, as it really is abstractedly in itself, ugly and hideous." "Aye," I said, "and if it be ugly and hideous in your own eyes, what must it be in the eyes of God, Mr. Compton?" "Detestable, Sir, and abominable!" he answered in an instant, and with an unusual fervor. "Ah! Dr. Warton, I have argued, (but I will argue so no more,) I have argued at the midnight ball of harlots, and when ill-disguised under the wanton mask, that the gratification of those brutal passions is not criminal; that nature herself bids us reach forth our hands, and taste the fruits of pleasure which she has liberally provided for us; and that none but the morose cynic, the stern lawgiver, and the pensioned preacher, would endeavour to counteract her simple dictates. I tremble when I reflect that such false and hollow arguments have too often succeeded; but the promised fruits have turned out to be gall and wormwood in the end, if not to the actual taste. Such they are now to *me*."

"Yes, indeed," I rejoined, "it is very likely, and I am glad, for your own sake, that it is so. But how shall the evils done to society, to families, and to individuals, by such reasonings, and by actions correspondent to such reasonings, how, I say, shall those evils be repaired? We ourselves, by God's wonderful mercy, are spared perhaps to see the horror of our own principles and conduct, and to repent from the very heart; but who knows this of all the numbers that may have been corrupted by our example? How few are they who have the opportunity of being improved by our recantation! Like waves upon the agitated surface of a pool of water, which spread around in wider and wider circles, so does the evil of our bad example diffuse itself daily and hourly, and we have no longer any control over it. Nor does it cease to operate through the medium of others even when we die. In truth, it still proceeds when we ourselves lie mouldering in our graves, and the accumulated sum, no doubt, will be charged in part to us hereafter. We cannot reckon it up in imagination even, and we shall be amazed when it stands in array against us; but God has noted

it in his book from time to time, and there it must remain, if God so choose, unobliterated till the final account."

Mr. Compton was deeply touched with this picture of the evil done to society by a bad example ; and I might have been disposed to stop, but recollecting how salutary his grief might be to him, I went on almost immediately in the same strain. "Think also," I said, "of the misery brought upon private families, and of the poor victim herself ! Brought up in innocence, we have robbed her of that jewel. The delight and the stay of her parents, we have spoiled them of their chief comfort and support, and have brought down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Having sacrificed herself to our seductive flatteries, we have cast her off to scorn and a deeper profligacy, when we have satiated ourselves with her violated and ruined beauty. We have done this, perhaps, and without remorse we have hunted out fresh victims of our lust with a similar result. But what will they say to us when we all stand together before the last, unerring, impartial, inflexible tribunal ? Will not the parents demand their daughter of us pure and innocent as they would have always wished her to be ? Will not she herself exclaim, pointing at us with an extreme anguish, 'There are they who polluted my body and soul with sin ;' and will she not without ceasing invoke almighty vengeance upon our heads ?"

My own feelings were so much awakened by these representations that I paused for a little relief ; and then, turning towards the sick man, from whom I had studiously averted my countenance during this latter speech, that I might express myself with the greater energy, I observed that his face was covered with his handkerchief, and that he was sinking upon his pillows. Without delay I rang a bell which was upon a table near me, and immediately Mrs. Harrison entered by one door, and a nurse by the other. "Mr. Compton seems faint," I exclaimed ; so they flew to his help, and some hartshorn having been applied to his nose, he soon showed symptoms of recovery. However, Mrs. Harrison beckoned me to withdraw, and I went accordingly into the adjoining room, where I found Mr. Harrison in some anxiety. "There is no danger," I said, "Mr. Compton is getting better again. He would have fainted, perhaps, if the hartshorn had not instantly relieved him." "I was afraid," replied Mr. Harrison, "of another paralytic attack." "No," I rejoined, "there was nothing of that sort. He was over-affected, I believe, with the picture which I drew of the results of vicious indulgence ;" and then I related the substance of what had passed between us.

"Aye, aye, indeed," cried Mr. Harrison, "there is no wonder that he vibrated to that chord. Your supposition was no supposition to him ; facts, facts, Dr. Warton, now speak home to him as loud as thunder. A dark stain, I fear, will rest upon his memory :

and it will require floods of tears to wash out his own guilt. I am glad that you have probed his wound, and that he has himself shown so much sorrow." "I knew nothing," I said, "of any particular story; but I had a general notion what the habits of his life had been, and it seems likely now that he will never have any other means of showing the sincerity of his repentance but by the abundance of his grief. Therefore I tried to awaken him by pretending to arraign him at the bar above. But pray, Sir, go into the chamber, and bring me word again how matters proceed; and whether he will bear to see me once more. To leave him thus would be unsatisfactory."

Mr. Harrison went as I desired, and soon returned with a request from Mr. Compton, that I would come back to him. I did so, and found him as at the first; his sister supporting him, and the nurse having disappeared. Immediately he said, "Dr. Warton, you have compelled me to abhor myself, and to tremble still more than ever for my future lot. A fortnight ago my heart was stubborn and obdurate, and sorrow for sin could not obtain admission there. It was in my head, but did not reach my heart. Now, indeed, it is no longer speculative but practical. Yet there is no merit in it, to avail me any thing. Here I am, my strength is laid in the dust, my nearest friends can scarcely recognise my features, another blow and I am gone. What is now, then, the value of all my past pleasures? The memory only remains, and the memory is a scorpion! Sorrow, therefore, in my case, is a sort of necessary consequence: it is no virtue, it is not repentance, it is a punishment; for any good, it is like the tears of Esau, too late and unavailable."

The matter and the manner of this speech were pathetic in the extreme. Mrs. Harrison's tears, as she hung over her brother, dropped upon him. I bore up much better than I could have expected, and replied with sufficient firmness, "God forbid that we should attempt to limit his mercy! His invitations to repentance are full and universal, without qualifications and without bounds, and the examples of forgiveness are co-extensive. The true penitent, the spirit which humbles itself under correction, may look upward and revive. You remind me of the text about Esau. I told you before that you misconstrued it, and so in truth you do. Esau profanely despised the blessing of his birthright, and sold it to another. It is said therefore, in our translation, (but the translation is inaccurate,) that he found no place of repentance, although he sought it carefully with tears. The real meaning is, that, with all his tears, flowing as they did from his heart, he could not change the mind and determination of his father. His father had spoken prophetically by the impulse of the Holy Spirit. He could not repent or retract what he had said. The blessing was

immutably attached to Jacob. But though of a spiritual character, it was still but a temporal blessing, and the loss of it did not doom Esau of necessity to an eternal condemnation. Yet the story is a lesson and admonition to *us* with respect to the great spiritual blessings reserved for us in heaven. If we make light of them, and barter them away for present sinful indulgencies, it is very true God will place them beyond our reach, and we ourselves shall be found amongst those who will weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth in vain. All this, as you say, will be our punishment. It will work no change, no repentance, in the great ruler of the world. Our trial will be over, because our life will be over also. But whilst there is life there is hope."

Here I paused, and Mr. Compton too, was silent,—ruminating deeply, as it appeared, upon the argument suggested to him. At length I resumed—"Yes, I say, whilst our life is prolonged, there is hope of our salvation; unless, indeed, we have apostatized from the faith of the Gospel; unless we have denied the great Redeemer who bought us; unless we account the blood of his covenant profane and useless. If this were so, then, it is true, to whatever extent our life might be prolonged, and however sincere and afflicting our repentance, there would be no hope for us. No repentance built upon foundations of our own invention, upon human reason or natural light, none, in short, but that which rests in Jesus Christ and in *him* crucified, will arrest the decree which our sins provoke. God the Father will not be approached but through God the Son. There is but one mediator between God and man capable of adjusting the differences between them; namely, the God-man, one who partook of the nature of both, and was therefore qualified to transact for both; one who was commissioned by God the Father, and to be accepted with submissive gratitude by *us*; one who might not only intercede for us by supplication and prayer, as mere man could do, but plead for us in the fulness of his Godhead, and say, 'I have paid down the whole stipulated ransom for sinners; I have exemplified, by my sufferings, the divine severity against sin, and have satisfied all its demands; I have sealed and ratified the promise of forgiveness with my own blood: be it now fulfilled; accept, for my sake, almighty Father, accept the sacrifices of a troubled spirit, in which thy nature delights; despise not the sighings of a broken and contrite heart; which ascend to thee in my name. I am in *thee*, and thou art in *me*; and let every poor penitent upon earth be one with *us*.'"

I was not able, nor, had I been able should I have been disposed to attempt to add any thing to this. Nor was it necessary. In a moment, in an extacy of feeling, the sick man exclaimed, reaching forth his hand in haste, which I grasped with equal eagerness, "Ah! I believe, Dr. Warton; I believe—and may God strengthen

my belief! But pray for me, pray for me, I beseech you!" The tears burst into my eyes, but immediately I loosed his hand, and was upon my knees. Mrs. Harrison with her face covered, did the same. In this situation, before any thing was said, Mr. Harrison came in, impatient at our absence, and was soon, without uttering a word, in the same posture with the rest of us. Then bethinking myself in what I might be most likely not to fail, and what might also be fit for the present circumstances, I drew my prayer-book from my pocket, and opening at the Communion service, I read the penitential psalm, with the omissions and alterations which have been described on other occasions, afterwards the longer prayer in the same service, than the Lord's prayer, and, lastly, the benediction of St. Paul.

So I rose, and wished to be gone; neither caring to have my own feelings observed, nor to observe the feelings of others. But Mr. Compton arrested my step, and inquired if he might be permitted to receive the Sacrament. "Yes," I answered, "when you will." "To-morrow, then," he said, "at this time, let it be." "It shall," I replied, "if God will;" and then I hastened away. Mrs. Harrison remained unmoved in the same attitude of prayer, and her face hid; Mr. Harrison followed me to the door, and there he pressed my hand, but could not articulate a sentence. Thus closed this interesting, this consolatory scene; and thus, I silently prayed, may God often bless and reward the feeble endeavours of his appointed servants?

Before the day was over, a note arrived from Mrs. Harrison, to apologize for having permitted me to depart without her thanks. Her sensations, she said, were so complicated, that she could not describe them, and unhappily they had deprived her for many minutes of all power, of attending to proprieties of behaviour. But she knew that I did not look for any such poor recompense as that of ceremonious, or even of real gratitude. What would be my fullest and most delightful recompense I already had; namely, the certain consciousness, that her beloved, but unfortunate, brother was fast acquiring by my means the temper and disposition of a Christian. So she expressed herself. The next day I kept my appointment. The due preparations had been made for the administration of the Sacrament in the sick-chamber; but the intended communicants were not assembled. Mr. Compton was placed as yesterday, and I saw distinctly that his features were much restored towards their natural appearance. On the whole he pronounced himself better in every way. There were with him Mr. Harrison and a nurse; but as the rest appeared to be slow in coming, he motioned the nurse away, and began to converse with me on one of those subjects which now chiefly occupied his serious thoughts.

"I have been meditating, Dr. Warton," he said, "upon the ho-

liness of God. It is a sublime, and a fearful speculation." "It is," I replied. "We may get some notions of it by metaphysical reasonings; but those notions will be astonishingly enlarged and elevated by Scripture. The descriptions of it there are magnificent in the extreme, and, of course, when we compare ourselves with such a standard we shrink back with awe and alarm. When we are told, that the heavens themselves are not clean in God's sight; that he charges even his angels with folly; that the very purest spirits which encircle his throne veil their faces with their wings, and cannot behold the dazzling purity of their Maker—we have an apt image of *him* whose name is Holy; whom the cherubim and seraphim incessantly laud and magnify in their songs with the preamble of Holy, Holy, Holy; and the rest of whose perfections, however ineffable and inconceivable, are so much eclipsed by this, that it is on the throne of his holiness he delights to sit—in his holiness he speaks—by his holiness he swears. But then, as you say, the idea is the more terrific, when we reflect upon ourselves, and conclude, as we must of necessity, that such a Being is of purer eyes than to tolerate the sight of any the least stain of iniquity in his rational creatures."

"It is too true," he said; "and, therefore, whoever wrote that particular Psalm, it was a proper reflection of the author, that if God should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, we could none of us abide it." "No, indeed," I answered; "the very purest actions of the very best of human beings would be but *splendida peccata* in his estimation; they would look only like failings white-washed over, in comparison with his holiness. The eye of the world might see no flaw in them; the eye of the doer himself, turned inwards, but purblind with self-love, might discover no blot; but every flaw, and every blot stands out and glares in the perfect mirror of the divine excellence. If the mixed motives of men were analyzed, there would be found lurking amongst them too much of human frailty—too much desire of vain glory to corrupt what otherwise might have been sound and untainted; so that their actions will never endure the scrutiny of an infinite holiness. If this be so, then, what are we to think when we come to facts? What becomes of our arrogant assumptions, when we recollect, that the great mass of us do not merely fall short of being blameless, but are absolutely sinners? Nor is this the whole of our case. Every thing proceeding from an impure fountain must be impure itself. This is our misfortune. There is an original uncleanness about us, which the Holy One cannot behold with complacency; and which, when it has shown itself in the production of its proper fruits of actual sin, he must of necessity hate and loathe. Where are we now, then, and what shall we do? Shall

we dare, with this gross, tainted flesh about us, to approach *him*, a pure spirit, that inhabiteth eternity—that dwelleth in the high and holy place?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Compton, "I understand it now. We cannot treat with *him*, nor he with *us*. We want somebody, to smooth and facilitate the approaches for us; somebody, call him what you will, to mediate between the two parties; to intercede in behalf of the inferior, and to advocate a cause which would otherwise be hopeless." "True," I said, delighted that he had solved the difficulty himself; "this seems a simple proposition; but who is there in the whole universe of things equal to such a task? Who is there with authority to undertake it,—with love enough for mankind in their fallen, corrupt, and ruined state, to desire their recovery from it, and to labour for their restoration?" "I presume," he replied immediately, "that if men had been left to themselves, they could not have found any body. How, indeed, should they set about it at all? How could they be brought to concur in one person; and how could they know that God would accept his office? Indeed they were dreadfully ignorant about God himself. The probability is, therefore, that they would never once have thought of such a matter." "Oh! pardon me," I said, "they were always thinking about it. A mediator may well be called the desire of all nations. The want of this was the prolific cause of all those inferior deities and innumerable sacrifices amongst the heathens. These were intended to approximate them to the great Being, the universal Lord of all. Every nation had its peculiar mediator; nay, almost every individual; as the Papists, absurdly now, have each their patron-saint. But one man at least in the old world was wise enough to see the folly of such a system—I mean Socrates—who said that men would never have any certainty with respect to this great want, until some one should be sent down from heaven to teach them."

"Yes," replied Mr. Compton, "there he was undoubtedly right. It is manifest, for many cogent reasons, that the first proposition must come from above." "Clearly," I said, delighted again that he had himself suggested such a thought; "if men had been better acquainted with God than they really were, yet it must have been left to him, as the Sovereign, to declare, whether he would pardon sinners on any conditions; and if so, then on what conditions; and whom he would ordain to the important office of making those conditions known, and of carrying them into effect." "This is quite reasonable," he answered; "and so far the Scripture-scheme agrees with the conclusions of our reason. But now explain to me, if it be possible, why so exalted a person as the Son of God is chosen to this office. Here I have great difficulties. I admit and believe the fact; but I cannot understand the cause."

"There is no need," I said; "but still a very satisfactory cause may be assigned. Are you aware, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was the great Agent in the creation of all things?" "I was always aware," he replied, "that it was supposed to be so stated in Scripture; and I knew of the famous text, in the beginning of John, which is generally adduced to prove it. But I confess the whole thing appeared to me so incredible, that I never examined the question for myself. Supposing it, however, to be so, how does his being the Creator account for all the rest?" "You shall hear what I think about it presently," I said; "but first it may be useful to you, if I were to repeat the splendid passage of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians. After calling Jesus Christ the image of the invisible God, he goes on in this manner: 'By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.' This is sublime, it must be allowed; but is it not also full enough, and plain enough, to satisfy the most scrupulous, who admit the Scriptures at least, that Christ made the worlds and man?"—"Without all doubt," he answered. "Well then," I said, "now hear the sequel; 'This same is the head of the body, the Church; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.' " "A most striking passage, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Compton. "It asserts or implies, I think, every office that divines ascribe to Christ." "It does," I said, "and, what is more, it connects them all together. But tell me; have not they, who make things, generally the most care concerning them?"—"So it should seem probable," he replied. "And if the thing made," I said, "were so wonderful, so excellent, so noble a creature as man, do you suppose that the Maker would care the less about him, or the more, in proportion to the distinguished blessings and qualities which he bestowed upon him?" "The more, certainly," he answered. "Do parents," I asked, "appear to you to care what becomes of their children?" "Intensely," he replied. "And the more intensely, perhaps," I said, "the more perfect and excellent they themselves, the parents, are?" "I should imagine so," was his answer. "And if their children fall into danger, or distress," I inquired, "do not the bowels of their parents absolutely yearn over them; and are not all their affections and powers let loose at once, whether to pity, to succour, or to restore them?" "No doubt of it," was his reply. "Well then," I said, "Christ made man; and how divine the work was, we know by the ruins of it which remain, although so dreadfully defaced. What wonder,

then, that he should compassionate the workmanship of his own hands, so noble a creature, fallen from the high estate in which his bounty had placed him, and in danger of an eternal misery? Could he look on, and not be moved? Could he be moved, and not attempt to save his own offspring? Could he suffer the most glorious part of his dominion to be lost, without wishing and endeavouring to recover it? Hence, then, he becomes, he who was the Creator becomes, reasonably and naturally, the Mediator, the Intercessor, the Advocate, the Redeemer, the Saviour, of mankind. Who so likely, who so proper, to undertake and fulfil all these offices for them, as he who made them at the first, and has preserved them ever since by his providence? and observe the same person shall at last be our Judge. Well, therefore, may they, who accept him under all those offices, anticipate mercy, and they, who despise or reject him, judgment without mercy."

Mr. Compton trembled, but made no answer; and at this instant his sister entered, with several servants, and inquired if I would permit them to partake of the Lord's Supper in company with their master. "By all means," I answered. "It is a very favourable opportunity. They have been for a long time the inmates of a sick house: this, I should expect, must have awakened in their minds serious thoughts, with regard to themselves. We are none of us sure at any time beyond the single pulse which beats; but the constant sight of a death-bed prevents us from disguising this fact from ourselves, and urges us forcibly to prepare for that destiny which awaits us all. However, they must ask themselves this question, before I put it to them in the course of the solemn service: whether they are at peace with their fellow-men, as they would be at peace with their God; and whether they grieve for their past sins, and hate them so far as to resolve henceforth, to the best of their power, to walk in newness of life." "I have examined them, Sir," said Mr. Harrison, "as to all these points, and their answers are very satisfactory." "Very well, then," I replied; "they may partake of this private Sacrament; but I advise them to receive the Sacrament publicly in the church, upon the first occasion that offers, and, indeed, to establish themselves in the regular practice of it. God loves the celebration of his ordinances in the appointed places; but where it cannot be done, as in the case before us, we trust that he will graciously accept the will for the deed."

After this I administered the holy rite; and a remarkable circumstance occurred, which at first alarmed me, as being a deviation from strict order; but it appeared to produce a good effect, and therefore I did not interrupt it. When I presented the wine to the sick man, he held the cup in his hand for a few moments, and then addressed the other communicants as follows:—

“I am glad to see so many of you present, upon an occasion which is deeply awful to myself, and may be very useful to *you*. The greater part of you know only my calamities; there are but two who have been long enough in my service to be personally acquainted with the habits of my former life, before I was roused from my security by this severe but merciful blow. I entreat them to pardon me for the bad example which I have set them; and I hope, that both they, and the rest of you, will all be admonished to your profit by so sad a spectacle. I have sinned—I confess it—basely and heinously; I have done deeds——”

We were waiting in breathless expectation for the conclusion of the sentence. He began it with energy; but the recollection, I presume, of the deeds themselves—black, no doubt, and corroding the conscience—suddenly oppressed his voice, and denied utterance to any thing but sighs. In an instant, every eye that was upon him shed tears of sympathy. At length he was aware of it, and by a great effort resumed his speech.

“I will not wound your feelings, nor waste your time, by a particular enumeration of my sins, or by aggravating the enormity of them. I will reserve that duty for my own conscience, for the great God above, and for the minister of Christ, if he require it of me. But, believe me, amongst the various errors and sins of my life, I am deeply sorry for my neglect of this holy Sacrament. I have partaken of it but twice only; once very properly, but, alas! without any due effect. It was by the side of my excellent mother’s death-bed. Would that I had obeyed all her counsels, which her departed goodness and wisdom should have sanctified to my ears! Perhaps, she observes me now from her sainted sphere and——”

Here he stopped again in the bitterness of his soul. All our tears redoubled; his sister sobbed aloud; but soon once more he resumed, and finished. “The other occasion, upon which I took the Sacrament, was not a worthy one. It was a mere form, and to comply with the laws of my country, when I wished to become a magistrate. Perhaps she is wrong in imposing the necessity of so sacred and awful a ceremony; but at all events I myself was wrong in taking the Sacrament with worldly views. It is not unlikely that my motives may be mistaken now. Some one may surmise, that I am constrained by the fear of death. The fear of death has been wholesome to me, I allow; and I thank God for giving me the two warnings which I have had. But I am under no apprehensions of immediate death. On the contrary, the doctors throw out hopes of life, and you yourselves see how much better I am to-day. I receive this Sacrament, therefore, deliberately, and not in haste; from conviction, not from alarm; with gratitude, and warmth of affection, not with a cold thanklessness; with hope, and not in despair. I receive it, with a firm resolution to neglect

it no more, and with an humble prayer that God may bless it to my present and everlasting welfare.”

This being said, he emptied the cup, and returned it to me ; so I performed what remained of the ceremony, and took my leave, expressing my wish aloud, that the sick man might be left as quiet as possible, to meditate upon the solemn scene which had just been acted, and to realize some of its immediate benefits. It was his own wish too, he said ; so we all retired but a single nurse, who remained to watch over his solitude.

On my way home I met Mr. Cornwall, whom I have described in the dialogues upon religious melancholy. He turned back with me ; and observing, I suppose, an unusual gravity and thoughtfulness in my manner, and, perhaps, a redness about my eyes, he inquired, if I had been employed in visiting any sick person under extraordinary circumstances. “ Do you know,” I said, “ the inhabitant of that house ?” pointing to Mr. Compton’s. “ No,” he replied ; “ my residence here has been yet too short. But I have always remarked a great stir about it, and lately very often the carriages of physicians ; and I intended, when the thing came into my head, to ask you what was the matter, and who was the sick person.” “ I will tell you now, then,” I said ; “ but you must use your discretion in repeating the story. It is a proper one for the ear of every clergyman, and it may do good to many others besides. But it would not be proper for *me* to go hawking it about.” “ No, indeed,” he answered. “ I understand you perfectly.”

“ Well, then,” I said, “ I have just witnessed a most gratifying spectacle ! I have seen the complete triumph of our holy religion over a seared conscience, and a hardened heart ; I found a man a sceptic ; I have left him a Christian.” This prelude awakened, as might be supposed, his curiosity ; and I now gave him, in as compressed a form as I could, Mr. Compton’s history, and the heads of my conversations with him. But before I concluded, we had arrived at the rectory ; and, as he would not release me, until he knew the whole outline, we made several circuits of the shrubbery ; and then, upon leaving me, he exclaimed, ‘ *Macte esto !*’ His ideas of the possible usefulness of a parish-priest were highly enlarged, and his zeal kindled to undertake the same arduous duties. In point of fact, in no long time afterwards, he settled himself in a large and populous parish, like my own, where there was a vast deal to be done ; but where, unlike mine, there was no adequate emolument. He laboured hard in the vineyard ; his health failed him, and his spirits were almost broken ; so that he was compelled to abandon his charge to another. I record this as a lesson for the younger clergy. It is fit that they should have an exalted conception and a thorough sense of the importance and the

responsibility of their profession and office ; but at the same time they should previously count the cost, and make a due estimate of their bodily strength, and of what I would call, their force and power of nerve ; so as not to discourage themselves and ruin their future prospects by the hazard of a failure in the attempt to do too much. This was the result which threatened Mr. Cornwall ; but happily for himself and others his health improved, and he is now content to do good within a smaller sphere of action.

In the afternoon of the following day I visited Mr. Compton again. He had given directions, that, if I called, I should be brought to his chamber at once. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison were with him there. He was well enough to have been lifted from his bed, and placed in a large easy chair, where he sat wrapt up in flannels, and supported with pillows. I should have inferred, from the more cheerful air and relaxation of his features, that he imagined the bitterness of death to be past ; but to my first simple observation upon his improved appearance, he answered immediately, shaking his head, and contracting his brow, "I have no dependence upon it whatever. I may live, certainly ; but since my second attack, which was almost as unexpected as the first, my expectations of life have been much diminished. The present calm does not deceive me. No, Dr. Warton, it is not so much the freedom from pain, and the recovery of a little strength, and this change of situation and posture, which have improved my appearance ; as the disburdening of my conscience, the practice of repentance, the belief of the Christian religion, the knowledge of some of the reasons upon which it is founded, and the partaking of the holy Sacrament yesterday. These are the several things, which, by their combined influence, have produced the effect which you perceive, and upon which you congratulate me. But even in these respects I have much to do ; and I am well aware how humble I ought to be."

All this was admirable, and it was impossible not to be delighted with it. "Very well, then," I said, "you have now proved by your own experience, that the practice of repentance, so painful to the imagination, is not so painful in the act ; or, at least, that it is attended at every step with the consolation, the comfort, and the revival of the broken spirit. It is not like the sorrow which ensues upon the loss of worldly things, and sinks the man down to the confines of the grave, having no support, and no hope ; it is a sort of holy sorrow ; it has a cleansing power derived from the merits and promises of the Saviour ; it restores the man to himself ; it settles him in a peace and tranquillity unknown before ; amidst storms and tempests, without, it introduces a sunshine into his own breast ; it encourages him to repose on the Mediator, and to look up through *him* to a reconciled God. This is the process, Mr. Comp-

ton, through which you yourself have gone; difficult and painful, and almost impossible, when contemplated from a distant point; but satisfactory in every step, and most happy in the whole result."

"Yes, indeed," he replied, "and the Sacrament has crowned the rest. In the way in which I have taken it I consider myself as having acknowledged one main truth of Christianity, that Christ died for the sins of the world. I understand it to be a memorial of his death through all ages; and I understand the receiving it to be a public testimony that we are in covenant with him. By baptism we entered into that covenant; by this Sacrament, I presume, we keep up the recollection, and put in our claim to the benefit of it." "You are quite right," I said; "but besides the general benefits of the Christian covenant, there are particular and immediate benefits, without doubt, arising to all who partake worthily. It is impossible to think, that Christ is himself present in this Sacrament, without some peculiar blessing attending it." "But how is that?" he inquired. "Is the presence of Christ any thing more than a strong figure for his influence and efficacy?" "Yes," I said, "he is really present, but not bodily; neither by the conversion of the bread into his bodily substance, which is called transubstantiation, nor by the union of his body with the bread, which is called consubstantiation; his presence is after a spiritual manner."

Here Mr. Harrison interposed, and observed, that he thought this doctrine was not expressed with sufficient caution or clearness in our excellent Catechism. "You might suppose," he said, "that we of the church of England were Transubstantialists, like the Roman Catholics: or Consubstantialists, like the Lutherans." "Let us see," I resumed; "we will examine the passage itself;" and I opened a prayer-book, which was lying on a table near us. "This, no doubt, is what you mean. It is asserted here that the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." "Yes," he replied, "that is precisely the thing to which I allude, and which I consider to be too strongly expressed." "The form of expression," I said, "is very properly the same with that which our Saviour himself adopted; and it is explained in the same manner; namely, in a spiritual sense. For, look here—the passage to which you object is an answer to this question; what is the inward part of the Lord's Supper, or the thing signified? Observe, it has been already stated, that there are two parts in each Sacrament; one outward, and the other inward; and that the inward part is a spiritual grace. It is manifest, therefore, that by taking and receiving the body and blood of Christ, the Catechism means nothing more than this inward spiritual grace." "It is very true," replied Mr. Harrison; "when we take the whole together, the sense of one passage is limited by the sense of another." "So it is," I said; "and as, besides what is

clear and open to all in this Sacrament, there is a divine mystery concealed under it, nothing would have been more ill-judged than to cast off Christ's own form, which he himself insinuated to have a spiritual meaning, and to substitute another, which should convey merely our limited and partial ideas of it. In short, whatever Christ himself meant, when he said, that it was necessary for us to eat his flesh, and drink his blood; whatever he meant, when he presented the bread, and said, 'This is my body;' and when he presented the wine, and said, 'This is my blood;' we, by adhering to his expressions, include the whole; and, by partaking faithfully, we may hope to enjoy every portion of the mysterious spiritual benefit."

Mr. Harrison having declared his satisfaction in this explanation, I addressed myself again to Mr. Compton. "It seems, then," I said, "that, besides the general benefits to be expected from an obedience to the dying command of our Saviour, and from so positive a profession, as we make at the altar, of devoting ourselves to his service, and from the sacred act of acknowledging the inestimable value of his death, and our trust in it as an atonement for sin, and for our own sins in particular; besides all this, there is something else, which is more, I think, than a mere figure; some invisible union, perhaps, which takes place between himself and us, to our sanctification; some seed, as it were, implanted within us, which tends thenceforward to the production of the rich fruits of righteousness and holiness of life. And this, I apprehend, is effected by the intervention of the Holy Ghost, whom I formerly represented to you as bearing a most important part in the great business of our salvation. In fact, Scripture so states the matter, that, without the help of the Holy Ghost, we cannot take a single step towards that glorious end; and it is by this his spirit that Jesus Christ, as the God-man, is present, and acts every where. So far as his divine nature solely is concerned, he is every where, and at all times, present personally, like God the Father; but in his mixed nature, by which he is chiefly related to us, he himself resides in heaven, at the right hand of the paternal majesty, and his spirit is his representative here upon earth."

"Would it not be a simpler and more intelligible notion," inquired Mr. Compton, "if we were to consider the Holy Ghost as a quality rather than a distinct person, or as the spirit of God, in the same manner that the soul is the spirit of man?" "It is purely a matter of revelation," I answered, "and therefore we must take it precisely as it is revealed. But we should gain nothing in point of intelligibility by the notions which you suggest, and we should lose in other respects. If the Holy Ghost were to God what the soul is to man, we must change all our plainest ideas of God himself, whom we suppose to be one pure, unmixed, and un-

modified spirit ; and if he were merely a quality, how could he act at all ? No, nothing can be clearer than that the Paraclete, the Comforter, as Christ calls him, is a person distinct from the Father and the Son, but so connected with them as to proceed from both. The origin of the Son, we are told, is by some mode of generation totally unknown and inconceivable by us ; yet such, no doubt, as to occasion that peculiar relation which is expressed by Father and Son. Of the origin of the Holy Ghost we know nothing ; except that, whatever may be meant by his proceeding from the other two, it was from all eternity. And this circumstance of his being eternal, together with the other things ascribed to him in Scripture, compel us to make him a partaker of the Godhead. The work assigned to him in promoting our sanctification and salvation requires the powers of the Godhead, and therefore it is of deep importance to us to know and believe that he has them. We rely upon him with an unshaken confidence, because we are assured that his power and inclination to save us are concurrent, and the same with those of the Father and the Son. And to obtain his mighty aid we have only to pray for it and to use it. This is the practical part of the doctrine, which is open to the meanest understanding, and wants no metaphysical or fanatical interpretation."

"Yes," said Mr. Compton, "I perceive all that very clearly. There is a simple mode of viewing these matters, which is adapted to the general understanding and the necessities of mankind ; and there is another which may occupy the highest thoughts of the highest genius." "So it is," I replied, "but, unfortunately, many men in different ages have run wild in their high speculations, and thence arose the expediency of creeds to fix the boundaries of those speculations. The safe thing is, to adopt this rule of Scripture—'the secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and our children, for ever.'"

In this sentiment they all appeared to acquiesce, so, after a short pause, being desirous to go, I proposed that we should kneel down, and join together in a short prayer. This being readily assented to, I took the 103rd Psalm for my basis, and altered, and added, as it suited my ideas of the present emergency. The effect, apparently, was such as I might have wished. I then pronounced the Lord's Prayer, and the benediction ; which being finished, I rose and departed. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison would have accompanied me, but I did not permit them.

I hasten now to the close of my conversations with Mr. Compton. I have recorded every thing of chief importance which passed between us, and which does not interfere with other dialogues. It happens indeed perpetually, that the same subjects are discussed with different persons, but I record each of the discussions only

once, unless there be something peculiar in the beginning or termination of them, which throws a new light upon the subjects themselves; and unless also, the different attainments of the different persons not being adapted to the same modes of argument or explanation, I think it expedient, in pursuit of my main object, to show my younger brethren of the clergy how I endeavoured to arrive at the same end.

After the last conversation I saw Mr. Compton several times, and talked with him as usual. His faith and repentance appeared to me to be both of them lively and sincere, and I was glad to perceive no tendency whatever to fanaticism about him either in his language or conduct. The language, indeed of fanaticism, which betrays itself in an instant to those who know any thing of it, he had never learnt or heard, and it does not come naturally to any body. His conduct always discovered a proper self-humiliation, and a due distrust of himself. Because he had undergone an entire change of heart and sentiment, he did not, therefore, assure himself of his indefeasible salvation, or arrogantly assume that he was sealed for heaven. He looked back upon his past life, and was abased in his own eyes; and he looked forward, not indeed without the hope of a modest diffidence, but still with much of its fear and trembling. Perfect love casteth out fear, and he was inclined to love with all his heart; but he had yet had no experience in the ways of God; his condition was but the beginning of wisdom, and therefore it was very properly accompanied with a wholesome fear. Of this feeling I greatly approved. I am shocked, and my blood almost runs cold within me, when I hear, as I too often do, of the greatest of sinners, with no time for solid repentance, quitting the world with all the religious assurance of the greatest of saints; dying, in short, in the worst of causes as if they died in the very best. Even the thief upon the cross was humble, and acknowledged his own baseness. Never would I court the vain applause of having worked up the minds and imagination of the profligate to a feeling of security with respect to another world. It is a bad example for others, it is deeply hazardous for themselves. The conviction of the certainty of salvation is not salvation itself, it may be a most dangerous downfall.

During this interval Mr. Compton busied himself, I believe, in works of charity. He had been too selfish before, and had spent his whole income upon his private indulgences. Now he employed his sister to look for persons in distress, and to relieve them; and he subscribed liberally to all the benevolent institutions of the parish. But his career of doing good was short. One night, his female nurse only being in attendance upon him, came the third paralytic attack, which ended fatally.

I was sent for early in the morning. He was lying in his bed

upon his back with his eyes closed. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison were standing by; the former in deep thought, the latter in tears. I spoke—his lips moved, but he could not articulate any thing. I pressed his hand gently; he grasped mine with strength without loosing it. “It pleases God,” I said aloud, “to preserve his understanding to him in this great extremity. Let us seize the precious moment, and spend it in prayer.” He understood me, and let go my hand. Immediately we were all upon our knees, and I read the prayer appointed for those who have small hope of recovery. When it was finished I rose and took his hand again; and, putting my face close to his, I asked him if he had heard and comprehended me. I thought that he answered “yes,” but he gave me a sufficient sign by pressing my hand with vigour, and still retaining it. I asked again if he was firm in the faith of Jesus Christ; again he pressed my hand, and then loosed it. I concluded that any more questions would only disturb his last moments, so I pronounced over him the benediction at the end of the Visitation-service, and prepared to go. Indeed I could do no more. Hesitating a little, at length I went without being noticed; Mr. and Mrs. Harrison still remaining upon their knees.

In three hours I returned, expecting to hear that all was over. He was alive, and I was desired to go upstairs. Very soon, as I mounted them, I heard a dreadful noise, which it is difficult to describe. It resembled most the snorting of a furious horse. I started at first, but finding it to be repeated at regular intervals, I too well understood what it was. The door into the sick-chamber, at the top of the staircase, was wide open. I passed rapidly by it, but I had a glimpse of the dying man as he lay in the same position as before, with his nostrils distended and his mouth gaping. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison were in the sitting-room. She was on her knees, and her husband was supporting her. The sight had been too appalling for them, and they had retired here; but they were not out of reach of the noise, which had scared every body else away. At first I was disposed to endeavour to console Mrs. Harrison, but upon reflection I only said, “I will read the commendatory prayer.” “He is quite insensible,” replied Mr. Harrison. “I suppose so,” I rejoined, “but I will read it for our own use. Stay where you are, I will go by myself into the apartment of death. You will hear me from hence.”

Thus, without waiting for an answer, I stepped softly into the adjoining chamber, but the rolling of thunder over our heads would not have awaked Mr. Compton now. I came to the side of his bed, knelt down, and performed as well as I could the painful duty. The noise continued equally terrific; but every gasp seemed as if it would be the last. His mouth foamed, and there was no-

body to cleanse it. Fortunately his eyes were already closed. I descended the stairs, but the terrible noise pursued me till the door was shut upon me. In imagination I heard it afterwards wherever I went during the day.

On the following day, and not before, Mr. Compton died. It was a bitter interval to every person in the house. No one had the courage to approach him in this tremendous struggle of the soul to escape from the body. But at length she departed and all was peace.

THE END.

